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Analysis of the role that constitution and constitutionalism play in the making of polyarchical rule.

Author also examines their relationship to class power, political institutions, culture, and

leadership. He argues that constitution does not make for an effective form of constitutionalism.

Concludes that meaningful democratization in Haiti is difficult if class relations do not change drastically and are equalized.

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## CONSTITUTION WITHOUT CONSTITUTIONALISM: HAITI AND THE VAGARIES OF DEMOCRATIZATION

### INTRODUCTION

This essay analyzes the role that constitution and constitutionalism play in the making of polyarchical rule.<sup>1</sup> In addition, it examines their relationship to class power, political institutions, culture, and leadership. The argument is developed in the context of Haiti's difficult process of democratization.

The recent rise of the "new constitutionalism" (Elkin & Soltan 1993) has placed the construction of institutions at the center of political science. The assumption is not only that institutions matter, but that they are "the most promising avenue for changing the world" (Soltan 1996:2). According to this view, in periods of regime transition, institutions become determinant in the crafting of "good societies." The establishment of appropriate constitutions is perceived as the critical factor in the making of the democracies of the "Third Wave"<sup>2</sup> (Huntington 1991:15-16). In turn, the design of

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Latin American Studies Association, XX International Congress, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17-19, 1997.

2. According to Huntington (1991:15-16): "A wave of democratization is a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time. A wave usually involves liberalization or partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic. Three waves of democratization have occurred in the modern world. Each wave affected a relatively small number of countries, and during each wave some regime transitions occurred in a nondemocratic direction. In addition, not all transitions to democracy occurred during democratic waves. History is messy and political changes do not sort themselves into neat historical boxes. History is also not unidirectional. Each of the first two waves of democratization was followed by a reverse wave in which some but not all of the countries that had previously made the transitions to democracy reverted to nondemocratic rule."

such constitutions simultaneously causes the further development of, and is caused by civic virtue. For new constitutionalists, it is this virtue that generates the citizens' skilled and motivated imagination which enables them to trespass their narrow self-interest and embrace the common good.

Thus, constitutions simultaneously reflect and create "political culture." Elinor Ostrom (1996:31) describes political culture as a form of "social capital," that is "the shared knowledge, understandings, and patterns of interaction" which are usable for the crafting of institutions. Constraining and molding each other, social capital and institutional design interact in a dialectical way to create the terrain on which citizens can expand, limit, or freeze the "boundaries of the possible." In their preface to *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, Juan Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (1994:xii) argue that from the perspective of the institutionalist paradigm:

politics and institutions are viewed as independent variables in their own right, not simply as epiphenomena reflecting underlying economic and social forces. Complex organizations are more than aggregates of individual behavior; they are social structures with their autonomy and logic, affecting and constraining individual behavior and human choice. Political options and decisions are mediated by the rules and structures of the game, rules with closely related formal and informal dimensions.

In the eyes of the new constitutionalists, institutions make history, even if they are not independent variables. Institutions are in fact shaped and influenced by the dominant habits, norms, and ways of life of the polity. Political culture thus acquires great significance; it supports civic behavior making possible democratic institutions which in turn strengthen such behavior. In a mutually reinforcing relation, political culture creates the foundations on which constitutions rest, and in turn, constitutions define and open up the new social parameters molding political culture itself.

To this extent, situations in which civic competence is high are favorable to the crafting of institutions reflecting the common good, and the establishment of a democratic constitutional order. In this instance, the fundamental premise is that individuals, groups, and classes can detach themselves from their material, political, and social interests to devise a genuine commonwealth. Standing in mid-air, as it were, they can look at the general terrain and build those institutions that will serve as the foundations of the "good" society.

Many political scientists make a stronger version of that claim; they perceive the implantation and consolidation of democracy as a matter of political "crafting," (Di Palma 1990) and constitutional engineering through charismatic, creative, and talented political leadership. In this perspective, structural constraints and the obdurate opposition of classes are not seen as

determinant of the outcome; instead, in the words of Youssef Cohen (1994:119-20),

[they merely] narrow the possible courses of action in a given situation but always leave available more than one alternative to the actors involved. Although the actors face difficult economic and political problems, they in principle have the choice to act in ways that can prevent the breakdown of democratic institutions. This breakdown is therefore far from inevitable.

To this extent, democratization is increasingly viewed as a matter of political design and “constitutional knowledge” (Vanberg & Buchanan 1996). In this perspective, it is not that interests are ignored, but rather that they can be rationally curbed, if not altogether eliminated, by the acquisition of knowledge of constitutional theories. By explaining the operation, norms, and consequences of constitutions and their making, such knowledge facilitates choices that transcend narrow self-interest and promote “packages” of behavior enhancing democratic governance. A similar argument is advanced by advocates of “deliberative democracy” who place their faith in people’s capacity to reach moral principles through collective dialogue. Such a dialogue, in the eyes of deliberative democrats, has the potential to lead to the cultural internalization of the “significance and legitimacy of a constitutional system based on the rule of law” (Stotzky 1997:85). Once this is achieved, the transition to, and the consolidation of democratic government is assured. It is true that new constitutionalists and deliberative democrats acknowledge that class antagonisms, ethnic animosities, and dire poverty may constrain the rise of polyarchy; but in their view, these structural factors do not constitute insurmountable obstacles to democracy’s flourishing. Constitutional crafting, moral appeals, and rational deliberations can dissolve self-interest and generate an enlightened consensus for democratic rule. Doh Chull Shin (1994:138-39) has summarized the argument:

the establishment of a viable democracy in a nation is no longer seen as the product of higher levels of modernization, illustrated by its wealth, bourgeois class structure, tolerant cultural values, and economic independence from external actors. Instead, it is seen more as a product of strategic interactions and arrangements among political elites, conscious choices among various types of democratic constitutions, and electoral and party system.

What I want to suggest, however, is that while politics can be protean, *ruptures with the existing order of things and choices representing major historical alternatives* are rarely effected; the structure of power and the balance of class forces are obdurate constraints on such fundamental transformations. It is one thing to argue that political leaders have multiple

choices, it is another to assume that those choices constitute plausible and realistic options. Political leadership, however talented and imaginative, can only be hard put in situations of extreme material scarcity, profound dependence on external sources of power, and acute class polarization. This is not to argue that polyarchy is impossible in poor countries,<sup>3</sup> but rather that wealth, in so far as it provides rulers with expansive material means, facilitates their difficult maneuver in the complicated road to democratization.

Thus, while constitution-making requires knowledge, engineering skills, and political imagination, such faculties do not obliterate the reality that there is a fundamental difference between writing a founding charter and adhering to its norms and rules. There is a profound chasm between constitution and constitutionalism. Constitution making takes place in what might be termed a "moment of exception" reflecting either an ephemeral balance of power between contending classes and groups which are prepared to settle temporarily their conflicts, or the total victory of a particular social segment of society. Constitutionalism entails an enduring balance of power that compels and eventually habituates political actors into conforming to an institutionalized set of practices and behaviors minimizing the potential for arbitrary and personalized authority as well as the tyranny of the majority (Elster 1993).<sup>4</sup> This is the basis on which polyarchy is established.

Neither political culture nor institutions can sustain constitutionalism. It is the balance of class forces on which rest the foundations of culture and institutions which makes possible any type of constitutional governance. Constitutional knowledge, civic competence, and the desire for a good society are not unimportant in democratic transitions and consolidations, but they cannot obliterate class interests and the privileged groups' quest for maintaining their dominant position in the existing system of political and economic power.

### CONSTITUTIONALISM IN HAITI

In the Haitian context, the fundamental question then is whether the establishment of the democratic constitution of 1987 in the wake of the Duvalier dictatorship's collapse can in fact engender constitutionalism? It seems to me that by itself the constitution cannot achieve this objective; or to put the matter more clearly, the constitution is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the establishment of constitutionalism. Constitutionalism requires

3. Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) emphasized the correlation between wealth and democracy, arguing essentially that without material abundance brought about by bourgeois industrial development democracy was impossible.

4. Jon Elster (1993:2) contends that "[constitutionalism] refers to limits on majority decisions; more specifically, to limits that are in some sense self-imposed."

the regulated political unpredictability of polyarchy – a form of uncertainty contained within and structured by a predictable system of rules. Most critically, political actors have – at a minimum – to be convinced that the uncertainties of defeat do not outweigh the gains of a possible future victory. The pre-condition for the establishment of such convictions is the institutionalization of uncertainty within a predictable framework within which outcomes would neither be permanent nor arbitrary. That in turn, requires political actors to accept the rules of constitutionalism. Such acceptance, however, is thoroughly dependent on a relative equilibrium of power between the major competing political blocs of civil society.

Thus, constitutionalism is not merely a set of institutional constraints on majority rule, a binding limit to “passions” and arbitrary power, it is above all a pattern of predictable and civil behavior generated by a balance of class forces. The making of the constitution and the incentive to obey it are both dependent on power relations. Moreover, power relations can undermine constitutionalism when a privileged minority persistently uses the constitution to preserve its interests in the face of overwhelming popular opposition. In this condition, constitutionalism is nothing but the defense of the status quo and a legal obstacle to any meaningful democratization. It leads to a dangerous political immobilism which is likely to be settled by exercising brute force even if the contending parties make vain appeals to constitutionalism.

Constitutionalism is safe only when the parties are convinced that their respective weaknesses and strengths are such that if either of them violates the basic “rules of the game,” the other would have enough power to – at least – launch a mutually detrimental war of all against all. Thus, an equilibrium of power and terror is decisive in the consolidation of constitutionalism. Unless constitution making takes place in a conjuncture where the coercive apparatus of the state is thoroughly emasculated, it is unlikely to prevent ruling classes from launching multiple *coups de force* to suppress the eruption of popular classes onto the political stage and the potential transformation of the existing balance of class power.

A constitution cannot on its own transform political actors into polyarchical, let alone democratic agents; in conditions of extreme social polarization, it can only offer the fragility of written codes and regulations which are unlikely to withstand the ferocious retaliation of a threatened dominant class. The provisions of constitutional polyarchy are likely to function effectively only when subordinate and dominant classes perceive themselves as equally armed or disarmed; only such conditions create the incentives for the surrender of weapons to the moral force of written pacts and documents. A Haitian proverb expresses this reality succinctly: “*Konstitisyon se papye, bayonèt se fè*” (A constitution is made up of paper, but bayonets are made up of steel). It is sheer fantasy to believe that moral

appeals can equalize the balance of power and open up a rational dialogue between dominant and subordinate classes. Without such equalization, the incentive to compromise and reach mutually acceptable governing formulas is virtually nil.

It is no wonder that Haiti's adoption in 1987 of a new democratic constitution implied neither an "extrication" from authoritarianism,<sup>5</sup> nor a successful democratization. In fact, democratization failed miserably with the violence that erupted during the aborted 1987 presidential elections, and the 1991 coup. The uncertainties of democratic elections with their potential to upset powerholders twice induced the neo-Duvalierists into brutal putschism. This outcome was a logical reflection of Haiti's history; as Alex Dupuy (1997:103-4) has pointed out:

Haiti never had democratic regimes precisely because the most important political forces – the military, the prebendary state bourgeoisie, and the private sector bourgeoisie – always believed that they had more to gain under a dictatorship and more to lose under a democracy. The latter would inevitably have meant competition for public office and the right to rule legitimately. A democracy would also have raised issues of the effectiveness of government, public accountability, fairness, justice, and equality – all or any one of which would have threatened the interests of the beneficiaries of the prebendary state system ... [The] likelihood of a successful transition to democracy in Haiti, even to a democratic government that would seek to preserve the interests of the powerful and propertied elites, was very remote. This was so if only because democracies, no matter how conservative and repressive they may be, are unpredictable: They may create opportunities for social forces that stand to benefit more from such a regime to advance their interests and challenge established privileges.

In Haiti, the dominant class ultimately feared the regulated uncertainties of constitutionalism; it realized that in free and fair elections it might surren-

5. "Extrication" entails anti-authoritarian forces uniting in a bloc powerful enough to effect a negotiated transition to democracy. This process should not be confused with the lasting constitution of a democratic system, for the two phenomena are not necessarily mutually reinforcing: while extrication requires the unity of the proto-democratic bloc, it does not necessarily generate agreement on fundamental constitutional and institutional issues. Moreover, the founding of democracy leads eventually to a competitive division of the bloc itself and hence to potential instability. Adam Przeworski (1991:67) explains this dilemma well in *Democracy and the Market*: "[To] bring about democracy, anti-authoritarian forces must unite against authoritarianism, but to be victorious under democracy, they must compete with each other. Hence, the struggle for democracy always takes place on two fronts: against the authoritarian regime for democracy and against one's allies for the best place under democracy. Thus, even if they sometimes coincide temporally, it is useful to focus separately on the two different aspects of democratization: extrication from the authoritarian regime and the constitution of a democratic one."

der its immediate control of the state apparatus to representative of popular classes and/or a hitherto marginalized segment of the petite bourgeoisie. The island's dominant class is composed of a ruling class proper – a class that controls the state apparatus to enrich itself through prebendary gains, and a “possessing” class<sup>6</sup> that accumulates wealth mainly through “comprador” activities.

To pursue its extractive practices, the possessing class is compelled to “buy protection”<sup>7</sup> from the ruling class. Made up of heterogeneous groups with an unlikely capacity to control effectively the commanding heights of the state, the possessing class exhibits conjunctural patterns of servility toward the ruling class. Such servility is rooted in the “alien” nature of the possessing class whose mulatto and “Arab” origins preclude it from direct control of the state apparatus and force it into making large “donations” to political powerholders.<sup>8</sup> Always connected to the outside world through capital flights and ownership of foreign properties, the possessing class is a class in “transit” in Haiti. While it can and does play its exit option in times of emergency, its status is one of acute dependence on the Haitian ruling class.

Since the ascendancy of François Duvalier in 1957, the ruling class is composed of ever changing segments of the black petite bourgeoisie; whichever segment of it was on top, however, managed to monopolize the coercive means of power. Thus, what the ruling class lacked in institutional stability and homogeneity was compensated by its control and exercise of brutal force. The ruling class’ systematic practice of extortion rests on this control and willingness to use naked violence.

Both the possessing and ruling classes have no social project, except the day-to-day struggle of keeping themselves in positions of power, wealth, and prestige. Having neither a national vision nor a coherent ideology, their time horizon never goes beyond the immediate short-term. Ruling and possessing classes are not always in alliance; whatever unity they achieve is rooted in an opportunistic convergence of interests. They form an uneasy

6. By “possessing class” I imply the French concept of *classe possédante*, a class which has accumulated wealth through private ventures and independently of direct state predations. In Haiti, this class has been dominated by mulattoes and “Arabs,” two groups whose racial heritage and complexion would make it highly unlikely to gain “open” political power through elections. This is not to say that mulattoes have no power, on the contrary they do, but it is exercised in the “hidden spaces” of the political system. This is *la politique de doublure* whereby mulattoes control things in the “background” but cannot do so openly.

7. The concept of “protection” is well developed by Diego Gambetta (1993).

8. For instance François Duvalier was known to have extorted money from the possessing families in exchange for their personal freedom as well as their continued economic activities. Similarly, the coup that overthrew Aristide was financed by many of these same families (Ridgeway 1994:29-39).

partnership in which each has its own sphere of concerns, but which tends to coalesce when faced by a challenge from below.

#### THE FAILURE OF CONSTITUTIONALISM: ARISTIDE'S OVERTHROW

Not surprisingly, the dominant class opposed the overwhelming victory of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the 1991 presidential elections which symbolized the ascendancy of Lavalas – the masses' movement – and the potential political transformation of the status quo. Fearing such transformation and viscerally opposed to everything that Aristide represented, the dominant class abandoned whatever pretense of constitutionalism to support the military coup that overthrew the Lavalas government in September 1991. The coup indicated that the equilibrium of forces had not been established. The dominant class could depend on the ultimate power of the coercive apparatus of the state to block what it perceived to be a significant threat to its vital interests. Moreover, the military had profound grievances against Aristide himself whom they perceived as interfering in their corporate preserve.<sup>9</sup> On the day of his inauguration, Aristide purged the officer corps of most of its top commanders, and soon afterwards he created a special presidential guard to assure his own security. The army saw in these two events a direct challenge to its institutional integrity and therefore had its own independent reasons to overthrow the president. It is clear, however, that an opportunistic convergence of interests united the dominant class and the military. Both feared the ascendancy of Aristide's political class and the unpredictable outcome of its rule, and both had the material and coercive resources to put an end to the Lavalasian experiment. Indeed, despite their overwhelming superiority in numbers, subordinate classes lacked the organization, resources, and weaponry to counteract the putschism of the dominant class.

Thus, the decisive factor in Aristide's overthrow in 1991 was the balance of forces clearly favoring the dominant classes. It is true that Aristide's "prophetic," presidential style exacerbated an already polarized situation and that he ruled as if he had never been elected president of the republic. It is also true that he governed as the "leader of the opposition," with a wild and unnecessarily antagonistic rhetoric and that he lacked the attributes which would have moved his opponents into his own orbit, and situated them in his own programmatic strategy of social change. Aristide was indeed a prophet who had yet to acquire the agility and cunning of a

9. For a military perspective on the events leading to the coup against Aristide see Prosper Avril (1997:256-66).

“prince”<sup>10</sup>, but his incapacity to trespass his own political base did not cause his own downfall; it merely limited further his already bounded horizon of options.

In the conjuncture of 1991, when the power of the dominant classes still rested on brute military force and that of the subordinates on rhetorical exhortations, Aristide had little choice. At the time, the windows of opportunity were just too narrow to assume that in the process of crafting Haitian democracy “the realm of the possible, the plausible, indeed, the probable, [could] be expanded” (Di Palma 1990:6). Class polarization and inequalities were so acute that the rise of a “moderating” and “democratic” “political center” was nothing but wishful intellectual thinking.<sup>11</sup> In reality, Aristide’s behavior was immaterial, the coup was bound to happen.

Similarly, it is highly unlikely that a different constitutional system would have prevented the coup. Whether Aristide headed a presidentialist or parliamentarist regime was irrelevant; the balance of class forces and the Lavalasian program blocked the type of “deadlock-breaking” compromises that parliamentarism entails (Stepan & Skach 1993; Linz & Valenzuela 1994),<sup>12</sup> and debilitated the effective “imperial” rule of presidentialism. At any rate the semi-presidentialist regime of Aristide acquired only the vices of both presidentialism and parliamentarism. The president sought to bypass the National Assembly by imposing his program through popular mass mobilization, while parliament sunk into political immobilism under the paralyzing divisions of class, ideology, and personalities (Gros 1997:99-101).

Both Aristide’s prophetic rulership and the constitutional design of institutions played only a very marginal role in the making and unmaking of Haitian democracy given the balance of class forces, and the praetorian role of the military as the last trench of the dominant class’ power. In reality, whatever may have been Aristide’s style of governance, his call for social solidarity and for an equitable redistribution of wealth was bound to incite

10. Aristide is reported to have declared: “I will not be president of the government, I am going to be president of the opposition, of the people, even if this means confronting the very government I am creating” (quoted in Robinson 1996:291). See also Dupuy 1997:71-92, and two articles by Franklin Midy in *Haiti en Marche* of 26 octobre-2 novembre 1988 entitled “Qui êtes-vous, Père Aristide” and “Aristide: Entre le prophète et le prince” of 26 décembre 1990-1 janvier 1991.

11. Several American political observers and participants in the negotiations between the military dictatorship and the Aristide camp believed in the possibility of empowering a “political center” (Horblitt 1995:129-42; Pezzullo 1995:99).

12. Linz (1994) argues forcefully that presidentialism undermines democratization because of its “dual democratic legitimacy,” and the “rigidity” of its electoral structures. For a different understanding of presidentialism and an argument for the establishment of a semi-presidential regime as a means of facilitating democratization and stability see Giovanni Sartori (1997:83-140).

the opposition of old *chefs macoutes*, the military, and a segment of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, the dominant classes' hatred of Aristide stemmed not from what he ultimately did, but rather from what he symbolized. As David Nicholls (1996:xxx) has pointed out:

Aristide's presence in the presidential palace reflected and reinforced a new confidence among the poor people of Haiti. Servants refused to do what they were told, and were even heard to say that their master's luxurious house and cars would soon be theirs. The rich became worried that their privileged position was being threatened. The prospect of a social revolution appeared on the horizon.

The dominant classes' fears of a revolution and a world turned "upside-down" prompted their mobilization and support for the coup of September 1991. Moral appeals to share wealth and opportunities more equally, and Aristide's hugely popular slogan that "*tout moun se moun*" (all human beings are human beings) had very little effect on the dominant classes' behavior. These were no times for a Haitian deliberative democracy; brute force would settle the issue and Aristide could not help but face this harsh reality (Moïse & Ollivier 1992:137-92).

The failure of constitutionalism rested therefore on the very unequal balance of power between the contending political blocs. The countervailing force of a popular civil society was still too weak, unorganized, and defenseless to prevent the military coup; the absence of a democratic tradition was of secondary significance. It is true that profoundly embedded in a repressive type of presidential monarchism (Moïse 1988; 1990; and 1994), Haiti's political culture and history contributed to undermine the already limited potential of constitutionalism. With rare exceptions, Haiti's numerous constitutions beginning with the very first one promulgated in 1801 under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture (Janvier 1886:1-25), have all ratified the providential authoritarianism of a single all-powerful individual. Toussaint's 1801 Charter set the tone for future generations and declared him governor general of the island "for life." While life mandates were not a universal feature of all Haitian constitutions, they shaped political customs and expectations and legitimated the dictatorship of personal rule (Moïse 1988; 1990; and 1994).

Most Haitian leaders have firmly believed in the messianic nature of their authority and lorded it over *le peuple* with the most acute paternalism. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the military commander of the rebellious slaves and first ruler of an independent Haiti, nurtured the roots of the patronizing type of personal authoritarianism that Toussaint had implanted. On the very day he was named governor general for life of the country, he warned his compatriots against any form of dissent:

And you the people ... Remember that I have sacrificed everything to come to your rescue, parents, family, wealth, and that now my own fortune is nothing but your freedom; that my name horrifies all nations seeking to impose slavery, and that despots pronounce it only by cursing the day of my birth; and if you the people were to reject or criticize the laws that the genius who rules over your destiny for your own happiness has dictated to me, you would deserve the fate of perfidious people (quoted in Moïse 1988:30).<sup>13</sup>

In an effort to reverse this despotic tradition, the 1987 constitution provided multiple checks and balances as a means of preventing the re-emergence of the presidential monarchism that had so characterized Haiti's political history. Under the new system, parliamentary authority was dramatically expanded and that of the presidency sharply limited. The president had to share some of his power with a prime minister who in turn had to be chosen from the ranks of the majority party of the National Assembly. In the absence of such a majority, governmental instability was likely to engender a crisis of governance unless working parliamentary coalitions coalesced and accepted cooperation with the president. Presidential rule could be further restrained if the president were forced to run the country with a prime minister of a different and possibly opposing political party. Moreover, the emasculation of presidential rule limited the president's capacity to control the armed forces; the president could no longer manipulate the command structures of the military; the appointment of the chief of the army now had to win the approval of the National Assembly.

An imperial presidency remained, however, a constitutional possibility. It required the electoral hegemony of the president's party. In this instance, the president could rely on his/her parliamentary majority to have a prime minister of his/her own choosing; presidentialism could thus be restored through the ballot box. As Claude Moïse (1994:33) has explained:

When the majority in parliament comes from the president's party, then the government will reflect the president's political hegemony. Enjoying a preponderance of power, the president, in such a regime, will play a decisive role in the running of the government. On the other hand, when power is fragmented and when no single party can gain a Congressional majority, governmental stability will rest on the solidity of parliamentary coalitions. In this instance, parliament has great influence. Its power over the government is greatly enhanced.

Thus, Haiti's new constitution intended to block the rise of any form of personal rule (Haïti Solidarité Internationale 1990:118-19), but as Aristide's regime would soon discover, it could also prove a formidable obstacle to

13. This and other translations from French are mine.

the radical restructuring of society. For the constitution, with all its checks and balances, tended to produce a stultifying immobilism that favored the status quo of the dominant classes. By blocking or restraining the will of the overwhelming majority, the constitution provoked a *débordement* of legality as the Lavalas bloc sought to rule through mass and mob mobilization. This in turn was an invitation to the reactionary putschism of neo-Duvalierist and bourgeois forces. The confrontation between the parties that resulted in the coup of 1991 and the rise of Raoul Cédras's military dictatorship reflected therefore the majority's incapacity to expropriate from the minority the power, wealth, and privilege that it coveted. It symbolized a naked class struggle; it had little to do with a Haitian attraction to a culture of violence or despotism.

#### POLITICAL TENSIONS AND SOCIAL POLARIZATION

While it is true that the authoritarian tradition has colored Haitian history, its rise and persistence can hardly be attributed to some innate cultural trait.<sup>14</sup> Cultural explanations of Haiti's dictatorial heritage verge on racism and ignore completely the simple reality that this heritage is rooted in the predatory interests and rationality of the ruling class (Trouillot 1990 and

14. Lawrence E. Harrison offers an extreme instance of the cultural explanation of Haiti's underdevelopment. A former director of the USAID mission in Haiti, he contends (1993:105-7): "I believe that culture is the only possible explanation for Haiti's unending tragedy: the values and attitudes of the average Haitian are profoundly influenced by traditional African culture, particularly the voodoo religion, and by slavery under the French ... The Haitian people see themselves, their neighbors, their country, and the world in ways that foster autocratic and corrupt politics, extreme social injustice, and economic stagnation ... [Haitian society] is characterized by a limited radius of trust and identification, usually confined to the family ... The imprint of African culture, particularly Vodun, and slavery on Haiti, sustained by long years of isolation from progressive ideas, open political systems, and economic dynamism, is, I believe, the only possible explanation for the continuing Haitian tragedy." Harrison's argument leads him to endorse the idea of an American Baptist missionary who contended that since Haitians are not part of the Judeo-Christian tradition they externalize their guilt and are thus not responsible for their destiny. Allegedly, they can even steal without shame. In Harrison's view Haitians are different from "modern," "rational" individuals, and they are possessed of "anti-progress values" (1993:106-7). But this is not all, according to him, Haitian child-rearing practices generate an irresponsible, immoral, and helpless individual who is condemned to live in a thoroughly "uncivil" culture (1993:106-7). As Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995:121-22) has argued, racist comments of this kind reflect the "dangerous and resilient ... idea that the Haitian political quagmire is due to some congenital disease of the Haitian mind. Such a conclusion makes Haiti's political dilemma immune to rational explanation and therefore to solutions that could be both just and practical."

1995:121-32). The revolution against slavery and the persistent open and “hidden” forms of popular resistance against the repressive reach of the state indicate clearly that Haitians do not have a particular affinity for, and attachment to dictatorial rule. Indeed, the old practice of “marronnage” (Fouchard 1988; Fick 1990), of exiting first the spaces of slavery and then the regimented arena of a predatory state to create communities of freedom and cooperation, has demonstrated the remarkable capacity of the poor peasant and urban majorities to revolt against, and withstand the most severe forms of exploitation and domination. The history of marronnage is the history of the constant quest for liberty and solidarity by the abused Haitian masses. It is this tradition, rather than the imaginary democratic propensity of an elusive political center dominated by privileged classes, that can generate the basis of any accountable system of governance.

In addition, the old practice of *kombit* which inspired co-operative work and transcended the pursuit of self-interest, has re-surfaced with the rise of the new “democratic movements.” These movements originating from the grassroots and comprising trade unions, peasant associations, religious groups, and diverse professional organizations are the very foundation on which democratization can plant its seeds and flourish. This is not to espouse an easy triumphalism. On the contrary, the democratic movements face huge difficulties; they lack resources and organization and many of their leaders have become fatigued and demoralized by years of struggles and apparent failures, and some have even degenerated into opportunistic *grands mangeurs*. To this extent, members and cadres of the movements can easily fall into irresponsible, unaccountable, and self-seeking behavior. They can become the new patrons as they use their position to acquire illicit wealth and power, and followers can revert to being clients seeking modest prebends to survive in an environment of utter scarcity.

Thus, for the poor, civic organizations are increasingly providing an individualized *sauve qui peut* from the harshness of daily material deprivations; for the well-off, these organizations are multiplying opportunities for corrupt *combinaisons* and *magouilles* (intrigues). In fact, many civic leaders have degenerated into opportunistic entrepreneurs. In the process, the sense of citizenship and civic value has eroded to the point that the notion of a collective good has become a national joke and an object of the most acute sarcasm. Now, poor people tend to call civic leaders, politicians of all stripes, and virtually any person in position of authority “*Gro Manjers*” – the Creole word for big eaters, or those who are literally getting fat as a result of corruption and stealing public and private assets. And yet, if democracy is to have a chance in Haiti, it will have to emerge from the emancipatory forces of these democratic movements and civic organizations, or it will never come at all.

The implantation and consolidation of a genuine process of democratization are likely to occur only when popular civil society is denser, organized, and hegemonic and not when the dominant class holds unilateral sway. In fact, it is only when a civil society "from below" institutionalizes "political society," that democracy can have a real opportunity of materializing. As the constitutionally regulated realm in which political forces organize themselves into effective blocs to conquer state power and achieve their objectives, political society is the arena where political organs and rules, and intraparty alliances make possible any extrication from authoritarianism. Unless civil society can generate – specially "from below" – an effective political society, democratization can easily degenerate into "redictatorialization."

In the absence of strong, autonomous political organizations of subordinate classes the balance of power will inevitably tip in favor of predatory rulers and middle sectors whose commitment to democracy is always ambiguous and tenuous. The dominant class, and in particular its young entrepreneurial wing, has understood well the virtues of mobilizing its own associations and groups to create a civil society of the privileged to block the ascendancy of more popular forces. In its most visible attempt to capture the political initiative, it called for a major rally against "insecurity and anarchy" on May 28, 1999. The rally ultimately was rapidly aborted for fears that it might have degenerated into a violent confrontation between detractors and supporters of Aristide. Rally organizers led by Olivier Nadal, the President of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce, denounced Lavalasian partisans for disrupting and silencing "civil society," while counter-demonstrators voiced their outrage at what they perceived to be a "provocation" by members of the elite and old Duvalierist stalwarts.<sup>15</sup> The rally demonstrated that "civil society" has become a code word without any precise meaning to be manipulated by all actors to advance their own political agenda in the name of democracy. Civil society is therefore not the magical civic arena from which democracy will emerge. It reflects the political tensions and social polarization of the wider society. It may indeed be quite uncivil (Fatton 1999).

The creation of a more peaceful climate requires the creation of effective political parties capable of becoming the prime agents of mediation between state, civil society, and political society. Mass parties representing and articulating the interests of their respective constituencies, particularly subordinate classes, are a sine qua non for the establishment of a balance of power from which democracy can emerge (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens & Stephens 1992). The Haitian process of democratization, however, has given birth to movements rather than mass parties, to "one manism" instead

15. "Background and Analysis on the May 28th Confrontation at Champ de Mars" in *Haiti Progrès*, 21-27 juillet 1999, pp. 9-20.

of collective structuration. The parties that have crystallized have tended to be based on clientelistic and personalistic criteria. In fact, it may well be more appropriate to employ Kern Delince's term, *groupuscules* – minuscule groups – when trying to describe them. Delince has argued that these Haitian *groupuscules*; amount to “voluntary association[s] of political activists, constituted at the initiative of an influential leader, with the aim of participating in national politics ... [The *groupuscule*] is an *ad hoc* social grouping, which specializes in the accomplishment of a specific and temporary objective” (quoted in Dupuy 1997:68-69).

Paradoxically, such *groupuscules* may – in the short term – mitigate the difficulties of democratization. For they channel the mobilization of subordinate classes into divisive clientelistic and particularistic parties, reassuring dominant elites that the electoral process poses no major threat to their fundamental interests. In this sense, democratization is a delicate and contradictory process requiring simultaneously a balance of power between dominant and subordinate classes, and the political over-representation of ruling class interests through the relative fragmentation of effective radical mass parties. In Haiti, however, conditions were quite different. The temporary unity of the popular forces under Aristide's charismatic leadership generated the widespread perception, among supporters and foes alike, that the hegemony of the privileged classes was seriously endangered. This common perception obscured the simple reality of the extremely unequal coercive capacities of the contending blocs; while Lavalas could count on huge numbers of people, it lacked effective political organization and discipline as well as the vital force of arms which the tiny dominant class and its military allies monopolized. It is precisely because a euphoric and emboldened Lavalas movement failed to recognize this harsh reality and overestimated its strength that it succumbed to the coup of a frightened and ferocious dominant class.

The Haitian case shows that avoiding a coup and completing a successful transition to polyarchy demand limiting the exercise of popular power, impairing the ascendancy of subordinate classes, and privileging the interests of dominant classes.<sup>16</sup> Polyarchy's structures are paradoxically biased

16. Przeworski (1993:72, 79-80) argues convincingly that democratization requires the preservation of the material interests of the dominant classes and the authoritarian coalition. As he put it: “Thus it would seem that the Right must be sufficiently strong and the Left sufficiently weak, to reassure those who still have the capacity of arresting or reversing the institutionalization of democracy ... Democratization, understood as a discrete step of devolution of power from the authoritarian power apparatus to institutions that permit an uncertain interplay of forces, is possible if there exist institutions that provide a reasonable expectation that interests of major political forces would not be affected highly adversely under democratic competition, given the resources these forces can muster ... [Political] institutions that organize the democratic compromise must be designed in such a way as to protect interests of the forces associated with the authoritarian regime and thus minimize the extent of eventual transformations.”

structures, always curbing the scope and expansion of democratic practice. The creation of effective and autonomous trade unions, political parties, and other associational agencies is ultimately contingent on the existence of certain spaces of political freedom which in turn requires liberalizing coalitions with privileged and middle sectors. Unintentionally, when subordinate classes create their own organizations and parties, they reinforce the moderating impulse inherent in democratization. The process leading to the conquest of a minimal liberal democracy is thus thoroughly unrevolutionary.<sup>17</sup>

Upon returning from exile, Aristide realized this arresting fact. He was forced to enter into a tactical alliance with certain segments of the dominant class. The combination of overwhelming American pressures for compromise with his old enemies (Stotzky 1997:42-43, 191-207), and the reality that subordinate classes were severely debilitated by daily struggles for survival in conditions of extreme material and organizational deprivation, left Aristide with no other choice. The difficulties of mobilizing a popular counter-bloc to the dominant class were compounded by the small size of the Haitian working class and the difficulties of institutionalizing peasant interests. The return of Aristide did not ultimately challenge the roots of dominant class power, it momentarily raised the hopes of the poor. Overburdened, exhausted, and disenchanted, subordinate classes are increasingly cynical about the future and Lavalas itself. While it is unlikely that they will tolerate the return of a new Duvalierism, they are no longer mesmerized by the appeals of democracy and the electoral process. The hopes of *déchoukaj*,<sup>18</sup> of uprooting the evils of tyranny and implanting a just social order are gradually fading.

Significant signs of discontent are increasingly visible. "*Gran Manjers*" became the unofficial song of the 1997 Carnival symbolizing massive popular alienation from the Préval government and its economic program.<sup>19</sup> Huge masses of people chanted accusatory hymns of corruption, incompetence, and exploitation against the powers that be and the Préval administration. Such widespread discontent re-emerged in the bungled legislative elections of April 1997 in which barely 5 percent of inscribed voters participated, and in the continuous waves of students' protests and workers' strikes.<sup>20</sup> Haiti is now suffering from a general and profound malaise that

17. By minimal liberal democracy I mean a system that guarantees freedom of the press, individual rights, and regular and fair electoral competition. This system is, however, quite compatible with great social inequalities and the existence of rigid structures of class privilege.

18. *Déchoukaj* is the Creole word for uprooting; it became the slogan of the Lavalasian forces in their attempt to eradicate Duvalierism.

19. *Haiti en Marche*, 12-18 and 19-25 février 1997.

20. *Haiti Online*, May 15, 1997 [Internet text]; Agence Haïtienne de Presse en Ligne, 30 avril 1997 and 15 mai 1997.

can easily turn into a fundamental systemic crisis with unpredictable consequences.

Haitian constitutionalism is thus resting on a precarious political foundation which is further undermined by conditions of acute material scarcity. The incapacity of the political system to deliver resources with which to *changer la vie* and integrate social actors into a more accountable public realm has generated a growing sense of generalized discontent. This is not to argue that liberal democracy is impossible in Haiti, but rather that the utter lack of resources hinders further the complicated process of democratization. Indeed, it is clear that a democratic society cannot and will never be erected on the sole basis of a democratic will and consciousness. In the absence of advanced forces of production, a democracy, however hegemonic and popular its idea may be, is condemned to manifold distortions and regressions; in fact, it cannot even pretend to be a democracy, it embodies at best a crude or primitive form of polyarchical rule. As Karl Marx warned long ago:

[The] conditions of life, which different generations find in existence, decide also whether or not the periodically recurring revolutionary convulsion will be strong enough to overthrow the basis of all existing forms. And if these material elements of a complete revolution are not present (namely, on the one hand the existence of productive forces, on the other the formation of a revolutionary mass, ...) then, as far as practical development is concerned, *it is absolutely immaterial whether the "idea" of this revolution has been expressed a hundred times already* (Marx & Engels 1947:29-30, my emphasis; see also Marx & Engels 1964:240).

Thus, paraphrasing Marx the development of the productive forces is “absolutely necessary as a practical premise” of democracy, for “without it only want is made general, and with want *the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced*” (Marx & Engels 1978:529-32, 537-38, my emphasis). Indeed, the struggle for material well being in a situation of generalized scarcity is likely to lead to processes of intense class formation and differentiation *within* the emerging democratic-revolutionary bloc. In the Haitian context, this means that the Lavalas leadership issued from the lower middle classes and the “petite bourgeoisie” could easily abandon its radical transformative agenda and come to use its newly found state-power to accumulate resources and gradually integrate into the existing economic elite (Trouillot 1990).

Moreover, the historical trajectory of the Haitian “petite bourgeoisie” indicates very short lived revolutionary proclivities and more enduring long-term aspirations to integrate into the dominant class. The Lavalas cadres could thus easily fall into the most opportunistic type of behavior,

faced as they were and still are, with the vicissitudes of the democratic process, the generalized fatigue caused by difficult and permanent political combats, the acute material hardships of their social class, and their aspirations for upward social mobility. The attempt to be *bo tab la* by those *en ba tab la*<sup>21</sup> can, as it were, degenerate into an exclusive supper for the leaders of the Lavalas movement. These leaders may just join the small circle of *Gran Manjers* and abandon their destitute followers to the harsh realities of survival in a heartless and hungry world.

Thus, by circumscribing drastically the space for class "climbing," poverty generates a zero sum game in which wealth is acquired almost exclusively through the monopolization of state power and resources. In these conditions, the capture and continuous control of political offices become an absolute premium which imperils democratic governance as the electoral process loses its civility and turns into a matter of life or death. It is in this vein that the explosion of the Lavalas movement into competing blocs engaged in a naked struggle for power must be understood.

While the Lavalas movement has always been fragmented, it maintained a certain degree of political unity to insure both the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his eventual restoration after his overthrow in 1991. The circumstances surrounding René Préval's ascendancy to the presidency in 1995 provoked, however, serious cracks in this unity. By 1996 the cracks were wide open; two years later the Lavalas movement completely ruptured when Gérard Pierre-Charles's Organisation Politique Lavalas (OPL, Lavalas Political Organization) which partially controlled Parliament decided to change its name to Organisation du Peuple en Lutte (OPL, Organization of Fighting People). The new name symbolized OPL's profound antagonism to both Aristide and his de-facto political party, Fanmi Lavalas (Lavalas Family). This condition of mutual hostility created an acute political crisis paralyzing President Préval's vain attempts at governing effectively through executive privilege. The internecine warfare besieging Lavalas has caused a political stalemate and immobilism best illustrated in the incapacity of all political authorities to agree on forming a functioning government.<sup>22</sup> Since the resignation of Prime Minister Rosny

21. *Bo tab la*, and *en ba tab la* are Creole expressions meaning respectively: to be at the table and thus capable of sharing in society's wealth, and to be under the table and thus not only to be excluded from that sharing but also to be exploited by those who are doing the eating.

22. See Gabriel Charles-Antoine, "Une lecture de la crise" in *Haiti en Marche* 19-25 novembre 1997, pp. 3-6-7-14-17-18. The immediate cause of the Lavalas split was the bungled parliamentary election of April 1997. Poorly organized and with fewer than 10 percent of the electorate participating, the elections were "won" by pro-Aristide candidates and condemned as rigged by other Lavalasian parties, in particular the OPL. The OPL was bent on rejecting and thus blocking the nomination of any prime minister who would not be committed to the annulment of these elections. In addition, the OPL demanded the resignation of the Electoral Council which it deemed corrupt and incompetent.

Smarth in June 1997, the divisions plaguing the Lavalas movement impeded compromises on the designation of a successor. Four nominations were rejected by the OPL-dominated parliament.<sup>23</sup> The twenty-two-month stalemate ended only with Préval's decisive *coup de force* voiding parliament's term on January 11, 1999. With parliament out of office, Préval was free to install a new government headed by Jacques-Edouard Alexis "under [what he himself acknowledged to be] abnormal circumstances with regard to the constitution."<sup>24</sup>

While the primary mission of the Alexis government is the creation of a climate of peace for the organization of free and fair legislative elections, the circumstances surrounding its making have led to fears of a return to the old patterns of presidential monarchism. The opposition led by the OPL described Préval's January 11 action as a "coup d'état" which would plunge the country into "general anarchy." Haiti, the OPL added, "is no longer under the rule of law," since the President "decided to violate the constitution and destroy institutions."<sup>25</sup> In spite of these dire predictions, Préval and Alexis nominated a new Provisional Electoral Council which wrote new electoral laws that they eventually supported and signed in July 1999. The laws resolved, albeit ambiguously, the impasse created by the April 1997 elections which had seen the allegedly rigged victory of two senators from Fanmi Lavalas. While at the time both senators were officially declared winners of their contests, they never took their seats in parliament. Moreover, opposition parties, and the OPL in particular, called for the annulment of the elections and the scheduling of new ones, lest the country fell into utter ungovernability. In the end, the new laws did not directly nullify the 1997 ballot, but they effectively invalidated its results by declaring that nineteen senate seats rather than seventeen would have to be filled in the next elections planned for March 2000. The two senators from Fanmi Lavalas were thus deprived of their controversial victory.<sup>26</sup>

The question now is not whether new elections will take place, but under what conditions they will occur, and whether their results will be acceptable to the main political forces, particularly Fanmi Lavalas and the OPL. Initially scheduled for November and December 1999, the elections were postponed until March 2000 due to logistical and organizational problems. While most political parties accepted the necessity of this postponement, opponents of Fanmi Lavalas and specially the OPL feared further delays that would ultimately lead to a November 2000 ballot where both president and parliament would be simultaneously chosen. The conviction

23. "Political Feuds Ravage Haiti: So Much for its High Hopes," *New York Times*, October 18, 1998.

24. "Haitian President Installs Premier," *MSNBC*, March 26, 1999.

25. OPL Press Communiqué, Port-au-Prince, June 2, 1999.

26. "Haiti Approves New Elections," *Reuters*, July 20, 1999.

of most Haitian observers, is that if this were to happen, Aristide's electoral coattails would carry Fanmi Lavalas to majority status and thus seal the total hegemony of his political bloc. This possibility has alarmed anti-Aristide forces and poisoned an already tense political climate. Instances of violent confrontations at political rallies between supporters and opponents of Fanmi Lavalas<sup>27</sup> are undermining the likelihood of a compromise without which a peaceful electoral process resulting in the coming to power of an effective and legitimate government is impossible.

Paradoxically, however, the fear of a catastrophic outcome might well generate the conditions for a historic compromise between Aristide and his enemies. Without a pact insuring that all parties will follow the "rules of the game," and ultimately respect the results of the elections, a turn to a new despotism or generalized chaos is likely. For in the absence of such a pact, victory at the polls by any party would unleash immediate denunciations of voting fraud and calls for new elections on the part of the other. A descent into hell and generalized political instability would inevitably follow. The organization, supervision, and ballot counting must gain the support of all parties, before, during, and after the vote itself lest the electoral process loses legitimacy and causes further social polarization and violence. It is difficult to see, however, how the different Haitian political forces can reach a workable compromise and minimize their deep divisions.

While reflecting real ideological differences over the existing neo-liberal economic agenda and the substance and meaning of democratization, these divisions are more fundamentally rooted in personal rivalries and the fight for the spoils of power. On the one hand, the OPL sees Fanmi Lavalas not as a vehicle of popular change, but rather as the personal instrument of a demagogic and destructive Aristide. In fact, the OPL is convinced that the former president is bent on disrupting political life to demonstrate that he, and he alone, can restore order and peace. As OPL's leading figure, Gerard Pierre Charles, has put it:

The heart of the matter is the use Aristide has made of his influence and his domination from the sidelines, with the president's complicity, of many institutions in this country. [The worse the situation becomes] the more Aristide likes it, because he has this messianic idea that he and only he will be the one to save Haiti from chaos.<sup>28</sup>

Fanmi Lavalas, on the other hand, views the OPL as nothing but a coterie of corrupt, opportunistic politicians so blinded by their desire to destroy Aristide that they are capable of any political treachery and manipulation. Moreover, Fanmi Lavalas accuses the OPL of collaborating with old

27. "Fights Disrupt Haiti Election Rally," Reuters, November 30, 1999.

28. *New York Times*, October 18, 1998.

Duvalierist forces and reactionary members of the dominant class in an effort to undermine popular movements and block Aristide's re-election to the presidency. In reality, however, few differences exist between the OPL and Fanmi Lavalas; both have accepted, albeit reluctantly, the inevitability of neo-liberalism, privatization, and utter dependence on outside powers, particularly the United States.

Lavalas' internecine struggles reflect the desire of its petit bourgeois and intellectual *notables* to capture the state as a means of enhancing their class status. The utter lack of resources characterizing Haitian society has meant that the top membership of the original Lavalas coalition was too large to enjoy fully the fruits of power. To maximize the benefits of its individual constituents, the coalition had to shrink in size. The ruling cadres of Lavalas were thus bent on creating minimum winning alliances and this in turn implied exclusionary practices leading to increasingly bitter fighting between competing groups for a fixed amount of prebendary gains. Material scarcity engendered *une politique du ventre* (a policy of the stomach): in order to monopolize valued public goods for their own private gain, Lavalasian leaders became rational political entrepreneurs bent on organizing loyal followings. The Lavalas movement had increasingly become an unsteady and divided "accumulation alliance" as its claims on state revenues could no longer satisfy all its constituent parts.

The wombs of scarcity are likely to engender not only corruption, but also the perverse environment supportive of dictatorship. As Duvalierism demonstrated, scarcity enhances the capacity of the tyrant to draw the lumpenproletariat into his own orbit with minuscule payoffs and with promises of larger future gains for a chosen few. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1990:155-56) has argued:

[The] shrewdness of Duvalierist redistribution ... was that everyone could hope to profit some day.

For the majority of claimants, however, success was no more than a possibility ... [The] state apparatus could support an extraordinary number of cheap allegiances at the bottom of the pyramid and *at the same time* provide ever increasing incomes for the shrinking minority that reached the upper echelons ...

Contrary to what one might think, it was not the most prominent *tonton-makout* who maintained the regime of François Duvalier, but the high number of actual or potential *makout* of second rank whom the government bought at a very low price. The ferocious competition at the bottom of the ladder, which evokes the image of a basket of crabs, neutralized the potential for mass revolt ...

Average individual gains were low, but the number of claimants for crumbs who remained convinced of their chance was always sufficient to hinder the group solidarity necessary for effective action.

Hence, while material want and the ugly struggle for necessity are not absolute obstacles to democratic rule and effective collective action, they tend to favor the emergence of tyrants and populist demagogues. For instance, constitutionalism may be hard put to withstand the polarizing pressures of the persisting economic crisis which has exacerbated social tensions and fueled anomic gang violence. The accelerated development of private security systems for the wealthy and the recent wave of criminality – the “Zinglendos” phenomenon<sup>29</sup> – affecting rich and poor alike, are the harbinger of a Hobbesian world in the making. These symptoms of a collapsing public order sap any meaningful sense of citizenship and generate a seemingly unstoppable descent into a “war of all against all.” Even if the descent is ultimately halted, its effects are bound to gravely debilitate the already precarious democratization of Haitian society.

These effects will undoubtedly accentuate the impact of the lingering authoritarian legacy. For the return to electoral politics and the partial neutralization of the repressive organs of the state are not sufficiently institutionalized to insure the success of democratic consolidation (Stotzky 1997:42-3, 159-81). While Aristide effectively emasculated the military into a “fifty-man presidential band” (Stotzky 1997:180), former soldiers and *tontons macoutes* have remained a menace. They have been able to hide their weapons and undermine public peace (Stotzky 1997:44). Moreover, the moral dilemma of seeking national reconciliation while at the same time establishing the rule of justice has remained a Gordian knot. In reality, Aristide’s return had an elevated price: it required tolerating the persisting power of key sectors of the old dictatorial coalition, accepting a de-facto amnesty for past crimes as well as granting virtual veto-powers to former supporters of the authoritarian regime. A lingering despotism is thus inscribed or tacitly accepted in the norms of the post-dictatorial society.

## CONCLUSION

A prompt return to social normalcy has meant accepting the presence of unpunished torturers and murderers; it is a presence that may buy temporary peace but which may ultimately portend future victims. It is clear that the National Commission for Truth and Justice created in March 1995 by

29. “Zinglendos” is the Creole term for the new type of criminals who have emerged in the post-Duvalier period. The Zinglendos tend to be organized in armed gangs bent on making easy money through robberies of all kinds and drug trafficking. Their methods are extremely violent, varying from intimidation to murder. The danger is that the Zinglendos will increase their power by becoming the armed wings of different political parties and of “druglords.”

the Aristide government has failed to resolve that dilemma.<sup>30</sup> The hopes raised by the Commission for a national soul cleansing and for the development of a deep and meaningful sense of justice never materialized. In fact, the Commission's report, *Si M Pa Rele* has been so poorly disseminated that it has utterly failed to reach its intended audience.<sup>31</sup> Only a handful of Haitians have had access to the 1,200-page *Si M Pa Rele*. As Human Rights Watch/Americas pointed out in September 1996 (p. 18):

The Commission's mandate prohibited it from initiating prosecutions of any of the 8,652 human rights cases it documented, but expectations were high that its report would at least provide a public accounting of gross human rights violations under the military government. However, over seven months after the report's completion it has yet to be published and has had no visible impact. Only the recommendations were released, which one human rights advocate likened to a doctor providing a prescription without a diagnosis. The recommendations standing alone did little to address the root causes of human rights abuse in Haiti, nor did they provide an opportunity for victims' stories to be told in an official forum. Meanwhile, human rights victims and the courts have no access to potentially useful documentation of human rights crimes.

The rule of law which is such an intrinsic part of constitutionalism is thus denied. Its written and rhetorical celebration does little to insure its practical and effective implementation. The mere existence of a constitution does not necessarily lead to constitutionalism. Moreover, the material costs of establishing constitutionalism may be so high that they might undermine severely democracy itself. For the enormous resources needed to create viable, functioning, and relatively honest judiciary and electoral systems have to be drawn from other critical and starving sectors of society such as education, infrastructure, and health. In this "zero sum" environment, allocative choices are extremely constrained; the costs of implanting dem-

30. The report – without the annex – can be accessed through the WEB of the Haitian Embassy in the United States. Paradoxically it is virtually impossible to obtain a copy of it in Haiti itself (Human Rights Watch/Americas 1996:18-9; Rapport de la Commission Nationale de Vérité et de Justice, Haiti Online 1996-1998; Gros 1999:197-99).

31. The Creole "*Si m pa rele*" translates as "If I don't cry out." The Creole proverb "*Si m pa rele, m' ap toufe*," "If I don't cry out, I will suffocate" – suggests that it is necessary to express one's outrage against injustice in order to combat it. The National Commission for Truth and Justice has failed, however, to live up to the very slogan it has used for naming its report; the Commission was plagued by limited funding, incompetent staffing and management, and U.S. unwillingness to cooperate in documenting the killings committed under the military government. The United States has refused to hand over to the Aristide and Préval administrations the 160,000 pages of military and paramilitary materials detailing the Junta's methods and targets of repression that American troops seized upon occupying Haiti (Human Rights Watch/Americas 1996:24-25).

ocratic electoralism in Haiti may well collide with the improvement of social welfare. Finally, the material incapacity of both the Aristide and Préval regimes to respect the law, norms, and rules that they themselves promulgate can only generate growing popular cynicism and apathy. Thus, Haiti is at best a prime example of what Philippe Schmitter (1995:16) has called an "unconsolidated democracy."<sup>32</sup>

In conclusion, this essay suggests that a constitution does not make for an effective form of constitutionalism. Institutions simply do not soar above the material and political structures of society. They reflect the balance of forces governing class relations and interests, and their workings are severely constrained by the material environment within which they operate. Unless these relations change drastically and are equalized, and unless the environment becomes more productive, Haiti is unlikely to enjoy any meaningful democratization.<sup>33</sup>

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32. According to Schmitter (1995:16): ["Unconsolidated" democracies are] condemned to democracy without enjoying the consequences and advantages that it offers. They are stuck in a situation in which all the minimal procedural criteria for democracy are respected. Elections are held more or less frequently and more or less honestly. The various liberal freedoms exist – multiple political parties, independent interest associations, active social movements, and so on – but without mutually acceptable rules of the game to regulate the competition between the political forces. The actors do not manage to agree on the basic principles of cooperation and competition in the formation of governments and policies. Each party considers itself uniquely qualified to govern the country and does what it can to perpetuate itself in power. Each group acts only in the furtherance of its own immediate interests, without taking into consideration its impact upon the polity as a whole. Whatever formal rules have been enunciated (in the constitution or basic statutes) are treated as contingent arrangements to be bent or dismissed when the opportunity presents itself.

33. Guillermo O'Donnell (1992 and 1993) argues forcefully that the huge disparities of wealth, income, and power dividing Latin American societies make the implantation of mutually acceptable democratic rules improbable.

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MIMI SHELLER

## THE ARMY OF SUFFERERS: PEASANT DEMOCRACY IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC OF HAITI

Although metaphorically located on the “periphery” of the nineteenth-century world system, the Republic of Haiti was very much at the center of the processes of democratization and *de-democratization* that shaped the Atlantic world.<sup>1</sup> The very existence of Haiti as the first American republic to free itself not only from colonial rule but also from slavery defined the parameters of a worldwide struggle over freedom and citizenship for all former slaves and their descendants. Yet outside of Haiti itself, there is only a minor historiography of the postrevolutionary period (with a few significant exceptions<sup>2</sup>) and Anglophone interest usually jumps glibly from Haitian independence to the U.S. occupation of 1915-30. Framed as a story of failed government and continuous coups, these teleological accounts slide easily into the dismal Duvalier years, the plummeting impoverishment of Haiti, and the instability of Haitian democracy in recent times (cf. Diederich & Burt 1986; Wilentz 1989; Weinstein & Segal 1992). Anthony

1. Earlier versions of this article were presented to Warwick University’s Centre for Caribbean Studies in November 1998, and to the Association of Caribbean Historians Annual Conference, April 11-17, 1999, Havana, Cuba, whose participants I thank for their comments. Support for this research was provided by an Eleanor Goldmark Black dissertation fellowship from the New School for Social Research, the MacArthur Program in Global Change and Liberalism, and a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan’s Center for Afroamerican and African Studies. This work also draws on Chapter 5 of Mimi Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Radicalism in Haiti and Jamaica* (2000). All translations from French are my own unless otherwise noted in the bibliography.

2. The most significant contemporary work on post-independence Haiti is Nicholls 1996. Others cover the nineteenth century within larger overviews (Moïse 1988; Dupuy 1989; Trouillot 1990; Bellegarde-Smith 1990), from a foreign diplomatic perspective (Plummer 1992), or from a more literary perspective (Dash 1997). For a crucial discussion of the “silencing” of Haiti’s history, cf. Trouillot 1995.

Maingot (1996) would even attribute Haiti's ongoing political instability to the long-term failure of "national norms" due to its violent decolonization.<sup>3</sup> If some choose to see the Haitian Revolution as a crucial advance towards universal freedom (cf. James 1989), these more critical narratives imply that it left permanent scars that did not heal.

What went wrong with the Haitian project of self-liberation? Unlike other groups emancipated from slavery, who struggled to assert their new rights of citizenship, the free peasantry of Haiti are often described as being politically apathetic, socially disorganized, and overly enamored of *caudillo* leaders (e.g., Mintz 1989:298; Stinchcombe 1995:252, 286). This judgement is in part based on a reading of nineteenth-century sources, many of which concluded that the Haitian people were not ready to rule themselves. As the British Consul General Charles Mackenzie (1970:xi) charged, "Haiti is in its infancy; and the population formed out of discordant materials, is precisely in the state that might be anticipated by any one at all conversant with the history of Mankind." From this perspective, the Haitian Revolution was a triumph of African "barbarism" over French civilization and the Haitian people were alleged to be politically immature and incapable of good government (Sheller 1999; cf. Nicholls 1974).

Even in recent times the failure of Haitian democracy is continually attributed to its "political culture," despite the best efforts of external forces like the U.S. military to "uphold" or "restore" democracy in Haiti.<sup>4</sup> A typical example of this story of failure is Amy Wilentz's popular account of Haiti since Duvalier. However sympathetic she may be toward the Haitian plight, Wilentz (1989:207) asserts that "cults of personality and a reliance on spoils and revenge have characterized Haitian politics." Although critical of those who have attributed this inefficiency and violence to "an African trait," she proposes that it grew out of Haiti's unique history of "slave revolt," which she claims was led by men who had purposely been denied education by the French. These ignorant slaves, in explicit contrast to the "elite cadres" who led the American Revolution, according to Wilentz, could not possibly have had the "political roots" enabling them to establish a successful government. Thus, the ignorant

3. Maingot (1996:76) suggests that in contrast to Haiti, the British West Indies enjoyed "a normative context all groups could participate in," because they had thankfully and wisely chosen a non-revolutionary "conservative path to liberation."

4. As *The New York Times* reported, for example, the withdrawal of a regular American military presence from Haiti in January 2000 would be a "blow" to the "thousands of Haitians [who] have benefited [from it] ... [and] countless more [who] have taken psychological comfort." It then quotes the current U.S. ambassador to Haiti, Timothy Carney, who chides: "The real challenge is for Haitians to come together and address their past so that they can come up with answers that will help them create their future ... The political culture has got to change." David Gonzalez, "Haiti's Paralysis Spreads as U.S. Troops Pack Up," *The New York Times*, November 10, 1999.

slaves of Haiti had only two models on which to base an idea of governance: the plantation and the tribe. Though some of their leaders had learned to read and write, they could not, nor did they try to, impose a new form of order on the Haitian people ... Slaves became peasants, and their descendants have remained peasants (Wilentz 1989:207-8).

These benighted serfs, it would seem, make easy fodder for dictators like Duvalier.

Aside from the fact that this account ignores Haiti's long constitutional history and highly distinguished and accomplished nineteenth-century intellectuals, this conception of Haitian political culture rests on a set of deep assumptions about the social origins of democracy. The limitations of democracy in Haiti (and the Hispanic Caribbean) here serve as foils to the allegedly deeply democratic political cultures of the British Commonwealth Caribbean or the United States (cf. Dominguez, Pastor & Worrell 1993). Democracy is understood as more viable in the British West Indies because of its gradual process of emancipation, its inheritance of British institutions, and its colonial tutelage (Payne 1993). The "grand narrative" of democratization – supposedly enacted by enlightened metropolitan social movements and consolidated over centuries in places like France, the United States, and Great Britain – consists of a progressive tale of the spread of enlightenment and humanitarian values, including the abolition of slavery. It is a bourgeois-led phenomenon (Moore 1966) and, as Wilentz (1989:208) says, "No vast, resentful bourgeoisie that would clamor for equal access to resources and for some kind of democracy has come into being in Haiti."

I would suggest, however, that this hegemonic view of Haiti's faulty political culture is itself a product of the original hostile diplomatic reaction to the shock of a successful slave revolution in the midst of a booming slave-based transatlantic economy. Haiti's postindependence political development formed part of a wider international process of *anti-democratic* reaction to slave emancipation in many postslavery states of the Americas, including both the United States of America and British colonies such as Jamaica. In the case of the British West Indies, it has been recognized that colonial policy entailed limitations to democracy, in particular through the implementation of Crown Colony Rule.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, in the United States there is recognition that freed slaves lost out on the promise of freedom in the post-Reconstruction reunification of North and South (Foner 1988; DuBois 1992; Marx 1998). I want to suggest that democracy was also rolled back in Haiti (rather than simply being absent).

5. Rodney 1981; Holt 1992; Heuman 1994; Sheller 2000.

When Sidney Mintz (1989:297) wrote that, “Seemingly mute and invisible, apparently powerless, the peasantry of Haiti remind one of Marx’s famous dictum that peasants possess organization only in the sense that the potatoes in a sack of potatoes are organized,” he was referring to the twentieth-century postoccupation period. However, he then goes on to note that “it is also clear that a century ago the national government was responsive to the peasantry in ways that it has not been since, and that peasant political resistance did, in fact, once manifest itself.” What implications does this earlier period of political contention have for our understanding of the development of democracy in Haiti, and more widely in the postslavery Americas? More careful attention to the interplay of elite discourses of democracy and popular political movements suggests that there was a popular radical democratic ideology amongst the Haitian peasantry in the nineteenth century. This article aims to demonstrate that the original antislavery, anticolonial, and egalitarian premises of the Haitian Revolution did not simply die out in the postindependence period. Arising out of the ashes of self-liberation from slavery, peasant democratic republicanism lived on in a popular vision of national liberty, civic fraternity, and racial equality, expressed through the Piquet Rebellion and other instances of popular mobilization in defense of democratic citizenship.

Based in part on a larger comparative historical study of the roots of democracy in the postslavery Caribbean (Sheller 2000), this article will focus on Haitian debates concerning popular political participation in the context of the Liberal Revolution of 1843 and the Piquet Rebellion of 1844. The liberal challenge to President Jean-Pierre Boyer’s authoritarian regime created a window of opportunity in which political ideologies of freedom and democratic participation were passionately expressed. A peasant movement calling for black civil and political rights and demanding a more democratic constitutional government emerged during the revolutionary situation of 1843-44. They called themselves “the Army of Sufferers” and were later known as the Piquets because of the sharpened pikes with which they armed themselves. The events of this period have often been portrayed as a struggle between “black” and “mulatto” factions, which in some respects they were; however, this interpretation overlooks additional political issues that were at stake, which are crucial to understanding the faltering history of democracy in Haiti.<sup>6</sup>

6. Standard interpretations of this period usually refer to a conflict of color, leading to a “politique de doublure” in which “black” presidents became front men for the “mulatto” elite. See, for example, Nicholls 1996, Trouillot 1990, and Bellegarde-Smith 1990. The color terminology used in this article refers to socially constructed and politically contested categories that appeared in discourses of the period and were linked to an international system of hierarchical “racial formations” (Omi & Winant 1986; cf. Sheller 1999).

Contrary to understandings of democracy in the Americas as a top-down process of “tutelage” or as a managed “transition” fostered by external economic or military intervention, my research suggests that Haitians have long struggled to institute democracy from the bottom up. The ideology, institutions, valuation, and desire for democracy were all well in place in Haiti in the first half of the nineteenth century. The absence of democratic tutelage (allegedly available in the British West Indies) is not, then, the reason for democracy’s apparent failure in Haiti. In tracing the popular movement for constitutional reform and democratization in Boyer’s Haiti, this article proposes that democracy was defeated in Haiti not by popular apathy or uneducated ignorance, as is implied in all theories of democratic tutelage, but by an institutional inability to subordinate the military to civil control. Rather than being an innate feature of Haitian political culture, this militarization was in large part due to the international context, which required a defensive response to the hostile diplomacy of the Great Powers. As Mintz (1989:267) suggests, “far too little scholarship has been invested in delineating the national and international forces that have operated to keep Haiti poor and backward.” The apparent “failure” of democracy in Haiti is best explained in relation to the country’s disadvantaged position within a world economic and political system that was based on slavery, colonialism, and militarism. It was that system which failed democracy not only in Haiti, but throughout the Americas.

By focusing on a period of intense debate over democratization and popular rights in the Republic of Haiti, I hope to show how political actors within Haiti debated various institutional arrangements and struggled to implement a constitution even more democratic than that of the United States at the time. Beginning with the ideological and institutional contexts for a democratic alliance in opposition to President Boyer, I trace the Haitian struggle for democracy through three phases of the revolutionary situation of 1843-44. First the liberal revolution itself, which ousted Boyer and led to a moment of democratic effervescence. Then, the revolution within the revolution, when an influential black landholding family mobilized the smaller landholders and farmers of the south to challenge racial inequality and the continuing “aristocracy of the skin.” Finally, in the third phase, a charismatic popular leader named Jean-Jacques Acaau emerged in a religious-political movement in which armed peasants seized the initiative, demanding economic reform, land reform, and protection of their constitutional rights as Haitian citizens.

## THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN BOYER'S HAITI

Haiti's initial years of state formation were stamped with military order because of the ongoing threat from France as well as a civil war which divided the liberated colony into a Republic in the South and a Kingdom in the North. The military footing on which the government existed impeded civil practices of democracy (Sheller 1997). However, following President Boyer's unification of the North and South (and invasion of the formerly Spanish Dominican part of the island in 1822), and the steps taken toward French recognition of Haiti's independence in the indemnification treaty of 1825, public debate and parliamentary politics began to flourish. As electoral politics intensified in the 1830s, tensions emerged between the central powers of a militarized presidency and the more democratic demands of elected civilians who formed an opposition to the president. Some members of this elected opposition also sought ways of opening the political process to the small landholder.

By the early 1840s the opposition's quest for a more open form of governance began to intersect with the peasantry's quest for the freedom, political rights, and social justice that they – or their (grand) parents – had fought for in the revolution and war of independence of 1791-1803. An indigenous ideology of democracy provided the basis for an alliance between a relatively elite (mainly *mulâtre*) liberal opposition group who were promoting some degree of democratization, and the large majority of small peasants and landless agricultural workers (mainly *noir*). Opposition newspapers publicly articulated the political arguments and moral justifications for a cross-class alliance against a presidency that was perceived to be autocratic and unjust. Those who opposed Boyer advocated freedom of the press, democratic forms of government, and protection of national interests from foreign domination. Haitians who had traveled among radical circles in France and Britain were familiar with debates concerning the working class, social reform, and socialism. It was at this intersection of elite radicalism and popular republicanism that democracy became a possibility.

The first tenet of Haitian republicanism was the exclusion of foreigners from land ownership. An 1841 article in an oppositional newspaper, *Le Manifeste*, argued that the constitutional prohibition on foreign land ownership was fundamental to "uprooting the colonial regime" because,

the participation of foreigners in the right of property would be fatal to our political existence. From the day, in effect when foreigners become proprietors, being capitalists, they will promptly reunite all the big properties in their own hands, by absorbing the small properties; they will be the masters and we the workers – they the exploiters and we the exploited.<sup>7</sup>

7. *Le Manifeste*, December 19, 1841, enclosed in British Foreign Office (FO), London, 35/24, Vice Consul Ussher to Lord Aberdeen, December 21, 1841.

The anti-Boyerists also felt it was their civic duty to bring progress to all of Haiti's people and saw themselves as representing the interests of the black majority. The British Consul referred to them as "the democratic party." In 1842, another opposition newspaper, *Le Patriote*, carried a series of articles on "droit public" that were a sort of primer on political rights. The author explained the democratic system of separate legislature, judiciary, and executive as "the three great wheels which regulate the existence of the social body and for which the motor is the people." The same piece called for public education, public libraries, and savings banks for workers.<sup>8</sup> In this atmosphere of "enlightened" liberalism, calls for wider political participation grew through the early 1840s.

More radical Haitian intellectuals cited European socialists like Saint-Simon, Owen, and Fourier, in arguing that true democracy required the distribution of land to all, and the pooling of labor, capital, and revenue. As one writer stated,

Association, there is the key to the organization of labor ... the social program of the modern republic is association in industry and election in politics ... [W]e do not conceive of democracy without the division of lands; we admit to promoting universal suffrage and the greatest distribution of property ... [T]he little properties can group themselves around a central common where the buildings and factories necessary for the exploitation of the groups' crops can be raised at common expense.<sup>9</sup>

While on the eve of the Liberal Revolution another writer argued in *Le Manifeste*:

Association is the only way to combat the aristocracy of finance that tends incessantly to absorb small capitals. It is the only way to arrive not at an equality of wealth, which is impossible, but at a certain equilibrium, which prevents those who have more from oppressing those who have less ... Association protects liberty in the industrial order, just as in the civil and political order.

Most strikingly, the unnamed editorialist then suggested that "emancipation of labor" would require equal laws for all, free and equal education, and "that capital or the instruments of production become directly accessible to [the workers]."<sup>10</sup>

8. *Le Patriote*, October 19, 1842.

9. *Le Patriote*, October 19, 1842.

10. *Le Manifeste*, January 29, 1843. This discourse clearly foreshadows *The Communist Manifesto*, which was published by Marx and Engels in 1848.

In defense of the existing regime, more conservative commentators countered with arguments that the Haitian people were not ready for democracy. As in other cases of “statist autocracy” Boyer’s defenders “portrayed the nation-state as a harmonious, integrated community in which competing class interests could be reconciled and smoothed away by enlightened elders ruling with the best interests of the society at heart” (Andrews & Chapman, 1995:20). The ruling elite dismissed the ability of the largely black peasantry to run their own affairs. As David Nicholls (1996:91-92) has shown, they

encourage[d] Haitians to unite under the leadership of the most patriotic, civilized and technically qualified group in the country, to legitimate the mulatto ascendancy in the social and economic field, and to lend weight to their claim to guide and control developments in the political sphere.

This elitist version of history dovetailed with European views of the situation, but should not overwrite the fact that there was simultaneously a more egalitarian and participatory democratic debate taking place within Haiti.

The mobilized opposition swept the elections of 1842, but Boyer garrisoned twelve armed regiments in the capital. When the deputies tried to meet, the army repulsed them. Altogether almost one third of the deputies, including most for the capital, all from Santo Domingo, and most from the South were forced out.<sup>11</sup> Revolution was near at hand. Following this crackdown on the elected representatives of the people, the liberal opposition formed the secret Society for the Rights of Man and the Citizen, which in September 1842 signed a call to arms and catalog of grievances known as the ‘Manifeste de Praslin.’ The Haitian historian Thomas Madiou (1988, VII), a contemporary of the events he chronicled, describes how this revolutionary manifesto was secretly circulated among the opposition in Les Cayes, Port-au-Prince, Jérémie, and other towns. Small groups communicated among themselves, swore adherence, and formed secret revolutionary societies.

The revolutionaries were also aware that they had to mobilize the peasant farmers to their cause, so they brought their project directly to the people by holding meetings in rural districts. They sought to “lead” the “cultivators” (or non-land-owning agricultural workers), whose support they needed. According to Beaubrun Ardouin (1860, XI:235-36), the revolutionaries elaborated their ideas in conjunction with small farmers in “patriotic banquets” held on the

habitations of the small proprietors, to better indoctrinate them. With speeches, with toasts, they excited the desires of these peaceful citizens in favor of the new order of things which they hoped to find, by promising them above all a more advantageous sale of their produce.

11. FO 35/25, Ussher to Aberdeen, April 20, 1842; *Le Patriote*, April 13, 1842.

Growers of coffee, the main crop of the small peasant, were appealed to in particular, with the promise “of a better future: the education of their children, better prices for their crops, abundance” (Madiou 1988, VII:421). They also succeeded in gaining the backing of the market women of Port-au-Prince who suffered a devastating fire in 1843 and were disgruntled with the government’s response to their losses, estimated at \$840,000.<sup>12</sup>

With popular support for Boyer at its lowest ebb ever, the secret Society sent a message to Charles Hérard, their chosen leader in Les Cayes, that the moment was opportune to take up arms. Word of the imminent revolution was spread among their “coréligionnaires politiques,” as Madiou calls them, and Hérard himself wrote to the “Giron of Jérémie” to ensure their support. It is significant that at this early stage in the revolution, Hérard himself was fearful of a popular uprising; he recommended “above all that no cultivators be introduced into the ranks of the national guard, which must be composed only of proprietors, sons of proprietors, farmers, and under-farmers, etc.”<sup>13</sup> This fear of an uprising of the cultivators indicates the extent to which this was an elite, not a popular, movement, despite claims to the contrary. The revolutionary faction in Jérémie, in particular, feared a popular uprising; as Madiou (1988, VII:443) observed, “it is evident that they wanted to overturn the government, all the while maintaining the people in order and in agricultural labor … [saying, in effect,] stay calm, keep working, we will take care of your interests.” Nevertheless, what began as an elite movement had to mobilize rural supporters to succeed against Boyer’s armed forces. This fragile alliance succeeded temporarily, but its underlying inequality was soon exposed in the face of growing demands from a mobilized peasantry.

The revolutionaries gathered at Praslin, Hérard’s property outside of Les Cayes, and on January 31, 1843, they formed a “committee of the popular government” which issued its first circular dated “40th year of Independence and 1st year of the Regeneration.” Once again, though, elite fear of a black uprising was paramount; they advised their supporters

to cooperate with the local authorities and the rural [police] officers on the necessary means for maintaining order, assuring public tranquility, and mobilizing the work of the countryside … [E]ncourage the *habitants* to persevere in their labor … [T]hey must have entire confidence in the efforts that we are making to ameliorate the people’s condition (Madiou 1988, VII:443).

12. FO 35/26, Ussher to Admiralty, January 14, 1843. For further discussion of women and citizenship in Haiti in this period, see Sheller 1997.

13. Hérard *aîné* to Honoré Féry, président du comité de Jérémie, 15 janvier 1843, in Madiou 1988, VII:436.

Even Madiou recognized the hypocrisy of this fearful elite. Their efforts succeeded, however, as Hérard's 5,000 insurgents marched into Jérémie and were "welcomed openly by the leading citizens."<sup>14</sup>

The locally stationed 17th and 18th regiments joined the new popular government in Jérémie. On February 3, over three thousand men crowded the Place d'Armes to cheer as two generals were sworn in as members of the provisional government. An act was passed (and signed by over three hundred men), stating the people's grievances against Boyer for "lacerating the social pact, attacking the inviolability of the national deputies, and annihilating public and individual liberties" (Madiou 1988, VII:445). They justified their actions in a letter to the governor of Jamaica, whose support they sought, encouraged by Britain's recent abolition of slavery and apparent support for democracy. They had "appealed to Arms," they wrote, "to claim their rights which the Authorities had endeavored to violate by the intended arrestation of some distinguished citizens, for no other cause than the expression of liberal opinions."<sup>15</sup> They claimed to have six thousand armed supporters and – after marching through the country – eventually reached Port-au-Prince with twelve thousand.

When government troops sent from the capital met the revolutionary army in the South, many soldiers refused to fight and whole regiments deserted *en masse* to the provisional government. The descriptions of this largely peaceful, yet revolutionary situation are quite remarkable. According to one British officer,

all the Soldiers having refused to fire upon their countrymen and, when repeatedly urged to advance by their Commandant, they went over in a body, and recommended the General if he valued his life to make the best of his way back to Head Quarters; indeed, it appears that the Rebels act only upon the defensive and have not in any instance been the aggressors; they have no uniform and many go unarmed, the leaders only wearing a sash or girdle, and on the two parties meeting, the Deputies step out and harangue the Loyalists, and it would appear to some purpose, as desertion amongst the ranks of the latter to a considerable amount invariably follows.<sup>16</sup>

Other accounts of the revolution confirm this method of conversion of the troops and mass desertion. The 11th and 14th regiments "went over to the patriots" without a shot fired, while the 4th lay down, pretending to be shot,

14. FO 35/26, Ussher to Aberdeen, February 15, 1843.

15. FO 35/27, Lord Elgin to Lord Stanley, February 16, 1843, enclosing Committee of the People (Provisional Government, Jérémie) to Governor of Jamaica, February 7, 1843.

16. FO 35/27, Commander Robert Sharpe, H.M. *Scylla*, to Admiralty, enclosed in Admiralty to Foreign Office, April 21, 1843.

until their general fled (Madiou 1988, VII:468). Mark Bird, an English Methodist missionary, also reported that the soldiers refused to fight the insurgents. When shot upon,

the national guard immediately shouted “Vive le Comité populaire!” and went over to them, followed by a considerable number of the government troops; the rest of the President’s army fled and each one saved himself as he could.

Bird blamed Boyer’s loss of popularity and the affections of his army on the fact that he had “ruled more as an absolutist sovereign, than as simple President of a Republic,” as the people wanted.<sup>17</sup> Another Methodist wrote that the

Haytien Revolution of 1843 is no ordinary movement of the kind, nor does the term revolution present the requisite idea to the mind; nearly bloodless and accompanied by no enemities, the revolution asks in behalf of the Son of the African his place in religious, intellectual, and civil society.<sup>18</sup>

#### FROM LIBERAL “REVOLUTION” TO BLACK “REBELLION”

On March 12, 1843, Boyer wrote a final act of abdication and embarked on a British ship to Jamaica. A week later, General Charles Hérard led the popular army on a triumphal march into Port-au-Prince, now renamed Port-Républicain. They were welcomed “with delirious enthusiasm,” wrote Madiou (1988, VII:473), with three nights of “meals, banquets, balls, fraternal embraces, [and] illuminations.” With Boyer gone, debate turned to what kind of government to form and what procedures to follow in forming it. As one participant put it in an article written shortly after the events, “one knew not how much the Haitian population was acutely moved by the spirit of democracy.” Only with Boyer’s removal, was all revealed:

From this moment, political passions became the day in the press with the impetuosity of a torrent that has broken its dikes. It was, as never before, the case of saying: Democracy flowed full to the brim. And what democracy! The shock of ideas the most heterogeneous, the alliance of

17. Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Archives (WMMS), London, West Indies Correspondence, Haiti, Bird to Secretaries, March 14, 1843.

18. WMMS, West Indies Correspondence, Haiti, Hartwell to Secretaries, December 6, 1843.

principles the most contrary, of American federalism and the unitary tendencies of '93; the sovereignty of the people replaced by the sovereignty of the commune; at last all the intellectual extravagance of a young people, untried and long hampered in the legitimate manifestation of their voices (Saint-Rémy 1845:681).

Some advocated an American-style system of town meetings generated from the bottom up, while others advocated a more centralized system in which the executive would direct the formation of local administrations. "One spoke only of the free and independent commune," wrote Madiou (1988, VII:486), and "as for clubs, one was passionately fond of them; it was said they were all that is beautiful, grand, positive; they were the foyer of enlightenment and of patriotism."

Yet as the electoral assemblies tried to hammer out a new government and a new constitution, tensions of class and color inequality bubbled to the surface. The democratic alliance that had briefly bridged these differences began to buckle under the strain of the revolutionary situation. At the same time regional divisions also took their toll, as the north and south of the country struggled to remain united, while the Spanish-speaking Dominicans in the east took the opportunity to declare their independence. Jealous foreign powers, including France, Britain, and Spain, were also gathering in the wings, ready to throw their weight whichever way seemed advantageous to their own economic and diplomatic interests.

When the peasantry of the South, under the leadership of the black land-owning Salomon family, turned against the provisional government, it became clear that the elite ideology of racial equality did not represent the reality experienced by black *habitants*. The South had always been a stronghold of *affranchi* power and land ownership, even in colonial days, and big coffee plantations had been maintained here after independence; thus class solidarity of the *ancien libres* was probably stronger here than elsewhere in the country. Yet it was also a region in which many black soldiers had been granted land under President Pétion. The disturbance began when the primary electoral assembly in Les Cayes split between a *mulâtre* faction supporting Edouard Grandchamp and a *noir* faction supporting Salomon *jeune*. Neither obtained a clear majority, but in the end Grandchamp won and excluded many black men. Madiou (1988, VII:506-20) writes that the "elite of the black population of Les Cayes" rallied around Salomon *jeune* and sent a petition complaining of color discrimination to the provisional government. The petition, signed by seventy men, charged that Boyer had oppressed the "black class" and that this "cancer" of "prejudice of caste" continued to destroy the unity of the nation. "[I]n this Haiti conquered at the price of the blood of both *noirs* and *jaunes*,

Boyer has succeeded in establishing a veritable aristocracy: he had made the colored class the dominator of the black class" (Madiou 1988, VII:503).

The format of these initial exchanges between the provisional government and aggrieved black citizens is significant for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the close intermeshing of class, color, and status in Haitian society, making it nonsensical to identify a conflict as due to one or the other; they always operated together, as in other postslavery societies. Second, it shows an initial attempt to act through civil, public means, e.g., meetings, petitions, resolutions, public manifestoes, etc. Likewise, the state initially responded to these claims through civil channels of communication. The provisional government sent an official delegation to Les Cayes to investigate the charges, and Salomon demanded annulment of the primary election, full participation of blacks, and that the government end "caste prejudice." He asserted that "the country is a common heritage, that it is by all and for all; that it was conquered by the black and the brown" (Madiou 1988, VII:516). He prepared a long exposé, declaring at its heart that:

The unjust are those who recognize as citizens only the businessmen, merchants, professionals, capitalists, etc. and who say they were revolted to see men with black skins, tanners, coopers, cultivators by profession, come to vote concurrently with them in the assemblies of the 15th and 16th of June; the unjust are those who do not want to conceive that in Haiti the *nègres* and the *mulâtres* are equal and constitute but one; the unjust are those who want to ignore that we all owe our independence to a *nègre*, to the great Dessalines who reigns in our hearts and to whom reparatory justice will one day raise altars (Madiou 1988, VII:512).

Use of the term *nègre* made an even stronger claim than the more polite term *noir* to represent the poorest Haitians, not just the elite. Finally, Salomon concluded,

we are the poor pariahs that they seek to disinherit from the patrimony conquered by our fathers, reddened by their precious blood. We want to be equal to all, we want to see the aristocracy of skin disappear from our society.... [W]e declare it to the nation [and] to the entire world (Madiou 1988, VII:512).

A government delegation managed to bring the two sides together, and a concordat was signed and approved by the provisional government. It momentarily seemed that democratic channels of communicative claim-making had preserved peace. In the meantime, though, General Hérard, who was leading troops in the east and was not in direct communication with the capital, received the original petition and ordered the arrest of its

signatories. By resorting to an authoritarian response, he broke a fragile democratic compromise between the two factions. As arrests began, the Salomons left Les Cayes in the night,

meeting on the habitation of Castel *père*, and reuniting the cultivators at the sound of bells and the *lambi* [a conch shell used as a horn to communicate over long distances]. They announced that they had escaped ... because of the persecutions the mulattoes exercised against the blacks. The cultivators responded to their appeal, armed themselves with rifles and pikes of hardwood, and organized themselves into cavalry and infantry (Madiou 1988, VII:521).

Government troops were quickly sent against them, and reports came to the capital of an uprising in the South, put down by General Lazarre. The Salomon army, "composed of approximately three hundred-or-so rifles and five hundred-or-so hardwood pikes," was pardoned and the Salomons were ordered to turn themselves in to the provisional government. They later left for exile in Jamaica.<sup>19</sup> This would not be the end of their political influence, however, for the questions of color and class discrimination still hung in the air and black citizens, both rural *habitants* and urban artisans, still demanded democracy.

The constituent Assembly finally approved a new constitution ten months after Boyer's flight. It called for the first purely civilian government in Haiti with a four-year elected presidency. Executive, legislative, and judicial powers were separated, and the legislature divided into a Commons and a Senate. Representatives in the *Chambre des Communes* were to be elected for three-year terms by primary assemblies in each "commune" based on universal male suffrage at twenty-one years of age. Each department was to have six Senators elected by electoral assemblies for six-year terms. Rights of citizenship applied to all people of African or Amerindian descent, but whites were still barred from Haitian citizenship. The Constitution maintained the longstanding ban on white or foreign property ownership and ensured a wide range of rights: inviolability of the home; sanctity of property; the right to write, print, and to publish one's thoughts; equality of all religious cults; free public primary schooling to be gradually phased in; the right to peaceful assembly; freedom of association; the right of petition; and the right to use any language (Moïse 1988:app.1; cf. Janvier 1905:38-39).

Soon, however, it became apparent that the long-awaited constitution was not to everyone's liking, and new fissures began to appear. Most alarmingly, conflicts emerged between the civil and military branches of government and between the new (but still mulatto-dominated) legislature and

19. *Le Manifeste*, September 3, 1843.

President Hérard, especially when national guardsmen refused to obey newly elected municipal authorities in some areas. As the British consul noted, “Hérard has all along expressed his dissatisfaction at the ultra democratic principles of the new Constitution, which he considered ill adapted to the habits of the people, and is secretly pleased to observe a similar feeling exhibiting itself in the Army.”<sup>20</sup>

The conflict, then, was not simply between black and mulatto, as many historians have argued. It was between those committed to constitutional democracy as the best route to black equality, versus those committed to statist militarism as the best route to power (allied with conservative big landowners and traditional local power-holders who feared and resented democratization). Some elements of the army were drawn to their origins among “the people” and supported the democratic revolution, while others (especially officers it seems) were drawn to their bread-and-butter position and supported a reprise of military authority. Military autonomy drove a wedge between the bourgeois/peasant democratic republican alliance, both by offering some less wealthy men a route to power within the army, and by planting seeds of fear of “the masses” among the wealthy elite, whatever their color. It was the constant threat of foreign invasion that had long kept Haiti’s government on a military footing (see Sheller 1999), and it was the resulting inability of civilians to wrest control from the military that destabilized Haitian democratization.

#### JEAN-JACQUES ACAAU AND THE PIQUET REBELLION

Throughout March and April of 1844 President Hérard was leading 30,000 troops against the Dominican independence movement, which had declared itself in Santo Domingo in February. The poorly provisioned Haitian army met with a number of defeats against smaller guerrilla-style forces at Azua and other locations, and Hérard declared that deserters would be shot. Meanwhile, his cousin Hérard Dumesle had been left in charge of Port Républicain as foreign minister, and was sending unpopular press-gangs through the city. A presidential proclamation blamed the Legislative Assembly for the Dominican insurrection. The next day, according to Ussher, “the Chambers were taken possession of by a military force, the Municipality closed, and both legislators and civic authorities ordered to shoulder their muskets and join the Army, where they might more effectually serve the Country.”<sup>21</sup> Ussher was especially concerned by reports that the Dominican rebels were negotiating with the French to become a pro-

20. FO 35/28, General Correspondence, Ussher to Aberdeen, February 23, 1844.

21. FO 35/28, Ussher to Aberdeen, April 5, 1844.

tectorate; the French fleet was stationed nearby and they were thought to have offered two to three million dollars in exchange for use of the northern port of Samana. The British worried that they may even have had designs on invading Haiti itself.<sup>22</sup>

Although the Salomon uprising of August 1843 had been defeated and the Salomons sent into exile in Jamaica, once the Dominican Republic declared its independence the opportunity was again seized to attack Hérard, whose press gangs and closure of the National Assembly were resented. This time, however, the popular movement was not led by big landowners like the Salomons, but by a political-religious leader who dressed in the garb of a peasant. As the sneering French Consul Maxime Reybaud (writing under a pseudonym) put it:

when the new regime was consolidated, when so much fracas had ended at nothing more than to give a few thousand epaulettes to the mulatto youth of the Hérard party, the “black people” understood that one had decidedly forgotten them, and looked to the four cardinal points to see if anyone would not present themselves to give them their “revolution à li” (d’Alaux 1860:55).

His use of the Kréyol phrase was a jibe at the peasant’s ignorance.

In early May, factions in the North and in the capital proclaimed the presidency of an aged black hero of the revolution, General Guerrier. Hérard was placed under house arrest. Yet this apparent “black” victory was no guarantee of democratic participation, and the peasant uprising in favor of the revolution continued in the South. Half in fear, half in mockery, the French consul wrote:

Guerrier, like Pierrot, like Dalzon, like Salomon, was only a *noir*, but now came in the south a *nègre* ... He was called Acaaau, “general in chief of the *reclamations* of his *concitoyens*,” he had gigantic spurs at his naked ankles, and, followed by a troop of bandits mostly armed with sharpened pikes being short on rifles, he wandered about, in the interest of “the unhappy innocents” and for “the eventuality of national education,” as the towns were depopulated in terror at his approach. Acaaau was the special spokesman in the “name of the rural population, wakened from the slumber in which it had been plunged” (d’Alaux 1860:56).

As Leslie Manigat argues (and David Nicholls agrees), the Piquet movement “was the fruit of the conjunction of interests between big and medium black proprietors and small peasant *parcellaires*, equally black” (Nicholls

22. On the Dominican Republic see Hoetink 1982; FO 35/28, Ussher to Aberdeen, August 22, September 21, October 23, and December 23, 1844; and FO 35/29, *Documents Republica Dominicana*, 1844.

1996:276, n.68). But was it simply a shared “black” identity that was the basis for their alliance, or was it a more sophisticated political identity that combined a critique of hierarchical divisions of color, class, and status within a discourse of egalitarian citizenship? The careful distinctions made between *noir* and *nègre* in the political discourses of the period indicate that this was a matter of more than color alone.

A former member of the rural police, Acaaau led the revolt of the “army of sufferers,” affirming “respect for the Constitution, Rights, Equality, Liberty.” In a number of proclamations printed in the newspapers, he called for the return of the Salomons from exile and an end to martial law; he also blamed the new government for failing to live up to its promises.<sup>23</sup> The British consul observed that Acaaau “is a man of some instruction for a negro, has great influence over his followers which he has acquired by Obeah [sic] practices, and affects the dress of a labourer.”<sup>24</sup> Reybaud described him as a bandit:

Following the black reaction of 1844, the bandit Acaaau came barefoot to the wayside cross of the parish, dressed in a species of canvas packing-sheet and wearing a little straw hat, and there publicly vowed not to change his clothing until the orders of “divine Providence” were executed. Then, turning towards the negro peasants convened by the sound of the *lambi*, Acaaau explained that “divine Providence” ordered the poor people, first to chase out the mulattos, second to divide up the mulatto properties (d’Alaux 1860:111).

He was backed by a religious leader named Frère Joseph, who clarified that what was meant were not color distinctions alone, but distinctions of class or status. The famous phrase is worth repeating in its full form: “The rich Negro who can read and write is mulatto; the poor mulatto who cannot read nor write is Negro” (d’Alaux 1860:112). The link to literacy is often skipped when a shortened version of this quote is cited (cf. Trouillot 1990:120; Nicholls 1996:78), yet it is crucial in showing how Haitian peasants recognized literacy (as well as class) as a status boundary excluding them from civil and political participation. Acaaau’s words, his presence at the cross-roads, and his clothing all indicated his liminal class position and his opening of politics to the peasantry.

Thus the Piquet movement had more aims than simply the seizure of mulatto property. The democratic ideology behind this movement is seldom appreciated for its radical egalitarian implications, which went far beyond questions of color alone. While elite and foreign commentators at the time interpreted his actions as a war between the races, Acaaau’s own proclama-

23. See *Le Manifeste*, May 26, 1844.

24. FO 35/28, Ussher to Aberdeen, May 24, 1844.

tions asserted that “it is not, nor can it be a question, in any circumstance, of a war of color.”<sup>25</sup> The French consul compared Piquet ideology, in retrospect, to that of the European movements of 1848, calling it “negro communism”:

“Unhappy innocence” plays, for example, the same role in the proclamations of Acaaau as “the exploitation of man by man” in certain other proclamations. “The eventuality of national education,” this other chord of Acaaau’s humanitarian lyre, corresponds visibly to “free and obligatory instruction,” and in so far as he reclaims in the name of the cultivators, who are the *workers* down there, “reduction in the price of foreign merchandise and augmentation in the value of their crops,” the black socialist has certainly found the clearest and most comprehensible formula for this problem of the white Acaaus: reduction of work and increase of salaries (d’Alaux 1860:115).

It is clear from these descriptions from both within the movement and from outside observers that the Haitian peasantry had a class-based ideology, and identified their enemies in terms of class and status exclusions, not simply on the basis of skin color. Theirs were the hybrid peasant/proletarian aims of other postemancipation social movements in the Caribbean. Their grievances were not simply a reaction against “mulattoes,” but against abuses of law, violations of the constitution, and subversion of their hard-won democratic rights.

The Piquets defeated government troops and gained control of much of the South, but eventually accepted Guerrier’s presidency. They were finally dispersed and defeated, Acaaau’s support eroded, and he was tricked into surrendering and sentenced by court martial to five years imprisonment. The Salomon family were recalled from exile, but rather than support the Piquets, they are judged to have “used their influence in the South to contribute to the neutralization of the Acaaau movement in 1844” (Moïse 1988:206). Salomon became a senator and influential minister, but never sought the democratization for which “the Army of Sufferers” had fought. This failure to unite the *noirs* and the *nègres* destroyed the Haitian democratic republican project, and contributed to the subsequent emergence of General Faustin Soulouque as emperor. He rejected democratic republican institutions and unleashed violent repression on the liberal *mulâtre* faction. This was not the triumph of blacks over mulattoes, but the triumph of statist autocracy over the potentially democratic alliance of radical segments of the elite, the black small land-owning class, and republican peasants and cultivators. Yet the Piquets would continue to influence Haitian popular politics for decades to come, especially in 1865 and 1868.

25. J. Acaaau, “Ordre du Jour,” April 23, 1844, enclosed in FO 35/28, Ussher to Aberdeen, May 2, 1844.

As Claude Moïse (1988:169) writes,

The *piquettiste* wave of 1868 was the third since 1844. Each time, the interventions came in periods of sharp political crisis within the ruling classes, provoking reactions of panic not only among the bourgeoisie of the South, but also among those of the West. If the agrarian claims of the piquets appear clear and precise, their political claims, their mode of organization, and their methods of struggle, are not well known.

The documents that come directly from Acaau, however, suggest some clues. The Piquets attempted to use democratic means of political address, justifying their claims in public proclamations and in newspapers, and seeking to uphold the democratic constitution of 1843. They mobilized supporters on the basis of out-door public gatherings and emphasized public education and broadening of political inclusion. They symbolically utilized the dress and Kréyol speech of the peasantry, showing in action the equality that they espoused. The timing, form, and stated grievances and demands of the Piquets all suggest a class-conscious movement, with radical democratic aims and a clear critique of landowner-merchant domination and unmitigated control of the state. We can call this a democratization movement because it carried on in the tradition of the anti-colonial and anti-slavery movements of the late eighteenth century, and represents the farthest “left wing” of democratic republicanism, despite its location outside of the metropolitan core. Its failure goes back to the militarization of the Haitian state, rather than to any kind of reputed fault in Haitian political culture. It is certainly clear that North American narratives of the lack of a democratic political culture in Haiti reflect an ignorance of the complex events that took place in the republic in the nineteenth century.

## CONCLUSION

The bitter paradox of Haitian history is that its successful revolutionary struggle to overcome slavery left the new republic with all the tools for democracy but one, and that the most fundamental: subordination of the military to civil control. If we step back and consider why the military was such an important feature of Haitian government in the nineteenth century, it is clear that the international context had a crucial impact, as it has done in more recent instances of attempted democratization (Rueschemeyer, Stephens & Stephens 1992; Paige 1997). France refused to recognize Haiti's independence and there were strong pressures on the French government from the *anciens colons* and their aggrieved heirs, who floated plans for military conquest of Haiti up until the 1840s. Britain followed suit

and would not recognize Haiti until 1838, after its abolition of slavery; the United States also held out until 1863, following its own emancipation proclamation, and put pressure on the South American republics to also isolate Haiti. This international diplomatic quarantine of the “black republic” was reinforced by the erection of high tariff barriers against Haitian exports such as coffee. The result of these policies was that Haitian indigenous democracy was thwarted by those who controlled the world economy based on the slave trade, countries deeply threatened by the existence of a free “black republic” (see Sheller 1999).

Thus Haiti’s experiment in republican self-government was strangled by duplicitous diplomacy, imposition of debt, and hard-biting European and North American policies of selective economic embargo and protective tariff walls. In this respect Haiti was a laboratory for later North-South relations and a model for the containment of anticolonial emancipation movements. Meanwhile, European and North American depictions of Haiti as primitive and politically immature, incapable of establishing “modern” political institutions, have served to deflect attention from the role of the “champions” of democracy in stifling democratization where it was a clear threat to colonial interests. As Sidney Mintz (1989:297) points out in reference to the twentieth century in Haiti, “North American hegemony … may have played a bigger role than has generally been recognized in the isolation of the Haitian peasantry from national decision-making.” Reclaiming the long history of popular democratic struggle in Haiti – and the adamant resistance of the Western powers to that struggle – places the history of democracy in the Americas in a new light.

In contrast to the temporal and spatial construct of “Western democracy” from which the anachronistic “backward” islands of the Caribbean have been excluded, when we re-calibrate the narrative and focus on hidden turning points, the plot thickens. The struggle of a rising bourgeois class against an agrarian elite is not the only condition for the emergence of democracy, as Barrington Moore (1966) posited (cf. Paige 1997). Democracy in Haiti was most vociferously defended by the postslavery peasantry. We can add to this a number of crucial observations on the origins and structure of democratic movements in the Americas. Democratization is not simply an internal process of class struggle, but always occurs within an international context in which multiple causal mechanisms interact. Secondly, it is uneven in its temporal development, with backward as well as forward steps, rather than a simple progressive linear narrative. And thirdly, its ideological and social origins lie in a wide range of dispersed locales and fragmented struggles in many different parts of the world, including the postslavery Caribbean, rather than always emanating from either the national or the global “center” out to the periphery.

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SLAVE MEDICINE AND OBEAH IN BARBADOS,  
CIRCA 1650 TO 1834

This paper addresses the medical beliefs and practices of Barbadian slaves.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, it seeks to clarify the role of supernatural forces in slave medicine, the range of beliefs and practices encompassed by the term Obeah, and how the meaning of the term changed over time. Although the historical evidence is often very limited, fragmentary, and obscure, it nonetheless offers clues as to the major elements of slave medicine and Obeah. These clues can be elaborated and reasonable inferences made, where historical materials are either lacking or very sparse, by applying African ethnographic materials and broad anthropological theory on magic, witchcraft, and sorcery. One cannot understand slave medicine in Barbados (or the wider Caribbean) without taking into consideration the African beliefs and practices on which it fundamentally rested.<sup>2</sup>

1. Preliminary drafting of some of the issues relating to this paper took place while I was an Associate at the DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research, Harvard University, in 1989-90. The first version of this paper was presented in October 1992 at "The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion" conference at Hamilton College. The present version was prepared while I was a fellow at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, Charlottesville. Rosanne Adderley, Richard Drayton, Joseph Miller, Kenneth Bilby, Philip Morgan, and Robert Vinson offered useful comments on earlier drafts. JoAnn Jacoby assisted in collecting African ethnographic materials from library sources, and Elaine Breslaw, Douglas Chambers, David Eltis, Magnus Huber, Robin Law, Christine Matthews, and Frederick Smith helped with several research issues and problems. Marcus and Sally Vergette helped immeasurably in many other ways.

2. The medical beliefs and practices of enslaved Africans is a topic that is not conventionally treated in any detail in the scholarship on British Caribbean slavery or West Indian medical history. One major reason why British Caribbean scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on European medical practices undoubtedly stems from the extraordinarily limited primary source information on slave medicine. Another reason may relate to traditional topical and methodological interests of historians, including a general reluctance to treat African ethnographic materials and apply them to the early West Indian setting. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that discussions of slave medicine are extremely limited. As a result, modern scholarship, intentionally or otherwise, has given the erroneous impression that slaves had a relatively small role to play in treating their ailments and physical complaints. See, for example, Craton 1978; Higman 1984; Kiple 1984; Sheridan 1985; Bush 1990.

The medical care of Barbadian slaves, like that in other Caribbean slave societies, fell into two broad, sometimes overlapping, categories. One was the slave community's self-help system, including several types of specialized practitioners, the other the care provided by slavemasters or plantation managements; the latter was essentially an extension of European medicine. The system of Euro-plantation medicine in Barbados was organized in a similar fashion to that of other British West Indian slave societies (Higman 1984:260-72; Sheridan 1985:268-320, *passim*; Handler 1997a). But plantation medical care, such as it was, overwhelmingly applied to working slaves and children with the potential to grow into productive laborers. It was oriented toward preserving the fitness of the labor force and its economic productivity, and, by the end of the eighteenth century toward insuring its natural increase. Whites generally showed little interest in the lame, elderly, or otherwise incapacitated, although these attitudes varied among individual slavemasters and by time period.

Data on European medical procedures and the organization of plantation medical treatment are much more plentiful than data on the medical practices of the slaves themselves, and thus can create an impression that European medicine had the major impact on slave life. Yet, such was not the case. In the earliest periods of plantation slavery, from around the 1650s to the early to mid 1700s, when whites viewed slaves more as expendable commodities and the costs of purchasing them were relatively low, slavemasters made few allowances for slave medical care. Although white medical practitioners were occasionally hired, slaves overwhelmingly relied on self-help and depended on the resources of their own communities; as the years progressed, slaves continued to rely primarily on self-help. In general, throughout the period of slavery, Barbadian slaves probably depended more on themselves and their own healing specialists than they did on European medicine. Aside from whatever discomfort and mistrust slaves felt for white medical practitioners, they tended not only to rely on self-help, but also to view it as more relevant to their needs.

As with the enslaved throughout New World plantation societies, those in Barbados who survived the very dangerous years of infancy and early childhood developed into adults who suffered from a wide array of ailments and diseases. Africans who survived the Middle Passage and the traumas of adjusting to the plantation regimen suffered likewise. No slave settlement was exempt from health problems (Handler 1997a). Many ailments and disorders, if they did not kill, were merely endured, and, as in all human communities, slaves often relied on the body's capacity for healing itself without medical intervention. In other cases, however, they attempted to treat their medical problems and relied on the resources of their own communities.

### AFRICAN INFLUENCES AND BELIEFS/PRACTICES CONCERNING ILLNESS/DEATH

Just as Europeans brought to the New World their ideas and practices relating to illness, including standard procedures in "kitchen physic," "home therapeutics," or "domestic medicine," and tried to adapt these to the conditions they encountered<sup>3</sup> so did the cultural baggage of enslaved Africans include explanations for their maladies and procedures for their treatment even though they could not bring their *materia medica* with them. Despite the enormity and cultural diversity of West Africa its traditional systems of medicine shared some broad characteristics.

These systems incorporated naturalistic or physical components in theories of causation and treatment; of more fundamental significance they intimately linked views of health and medicine with beliefs in the supernatural. A strong relationship between illness and supernatural forces is a widely held belief in folk or "tribal" societies. This belief is still held by many people in the modern, industrialized world and was prevalent in pre-industrial Europe. In seventeenth-century England, for example, among the many broad parallels with West African cultures, astrology, providence, sin, and witchcraft "were all legitimate points of reference in the interpretation of disease" (Feierman 1979:277, 279; cf. Hill 1974:158; Gottfried 1986). Magic was included in the diagnostic and therapeutic methods of early English physicians as well as folk healers and was "to one degree or another ... an integral part of the healing process" (Gottfried 1986:177, 179-80). The belief in witchcraft also characterized English society in earlier periods, and not until the late 1600s was witchcraft officially banned as an explanation for misfortune (Gluckman 1955:106; Feierman 1979:279).

In fact, in efforts to communicate with a British audience, early writers in Barbados would indicate that witchcraft or sorcery produced the same kinds of "symptoms" on slaves as on those Europeans, in the words of John Brathwaite, a wealthy eighteenth-century planter, "with weak and superstitious minds ... when sudden but vast painful affections of the mind are brought on."<sup>4</sup> Thomas Walduck, an English army officer stationed at Barbados during the early eighteenth century, reported the prevalence of sorcery/witchcraft on the island. He wrote how "white men, overseers of plantations and masters have been forced to leave this island by being bewitched by the Negros."<sup>5</sup> His comment implicitly underscored how

3. E.g., Dunn 1972:309-11; Puckrein 1979; Kupperman 1984; Sheridan 1985:74-77 and *passim*.

4. House of Commons (HofC), London, Parliamentary Papers (PP), 26, 1789, part 3, John Brathwaite, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa.

5. British Library (BL), London, Sloane Manuscripts 2302, Letters from Thomas Walduck to James Petiver, November 1710-September 1712.

Africans and Europeans shared a general belief in the efficacy of evil magic (and how such magic could be used by slaves as a weapon against slave-masters or other whites). Witchcraft, however, was not part of generally accepted European religious orthodoxy or tradition, while in African cultures it was an essential feature of "the accepted body of religious and moral ideas" (Mair 1969:181, 183).

Fundamental to the link between illness and the supernatural in African cultures was the notion that major misfortunes of life such as disease, serious physical trauma, and death, were often (if not always in many cultures) the result of supernatural forces. In many cases, every-day trivial complaints, such as indigestion, diarrhea, or mild headaches, may have been given naturalistic explanations. Even though natural causes were sometimes considered or sought, major illness or death were generally caused by specific agents; for example, acts of god or gods, malevolent spirits, the breaking of religious rules or taboos, the displeasure of ancestral spirits, and evil magic. Witchcraft/sorcery, in particular, was frequently (though perhaps not universally) invoked to explain fatalities and very serious illness and disease.<sup>6</sup>

Traditional African healers make "little distinction between body, mind, and spirit, in curing – the whole person is treated ... a person's social and spiritual milieu may be 'treated' through rituals in order to restore the balance between the various elements deemed necessary for total health" (Green 1980:491-92; cf. Augé 1985:2; Iwu 1988:15,10). Africans transported to the New World undoubtedly shared such holistic views, and there is every indication that major dimensions of West African conceptions of disease, illness, and serious misfortune were perpetuated in Barbados.

Major etiological beliefs of Barbadian slaves were broadly identical to those of many West African peoples. In particular, the strong African belief "in spiritual causation of diseases and death" (Iwu 1988:12) was transported to the New World in the minds of enslaved Africans. "There are but few Negroes," observed the knowledgeable Griffith Hughes (1750:15) in the 1740s, when many Barbadian slaves were creoles, "who believe that they die a natural death." Around the same period an English visitor learned of "many instances ... of Negroes dying" by believing themselves bewitched. Despite the efforts of white doctors to revive them, "they get a notion they must die, and this notion they absolutely retain to their death" (Poole 1753:300-1). About forty years later, when the great majority of slaves were creoles, Barbados' Governor David Parry reported that "even the better sort amongst them almost universally believe in witchcraft, and are so firmly persuaded of its effects ... [that] many of them despond and die when they

6. E.g., Horton 1967:53-54; Gillies 1976:358-95; Feierman 1979:278; Maier 1979:80; Iwu 1988:17; Jacobson-Widding & Westerlund 1989.

conceive themselves bewitched.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, he shared the views of many whites in maintaining that witchcraft or sorcery were significant causes of slave mortality. During the early nineteenth century, whites continued to link “many” slave deaths and injuries to witchcraft/sorcery.<sup>8</sup> They certainly naively simplified what was a more complex etiological system and were more concerned to publicize and emphasize the negative, evil, or anti-social aspects of the slaves’ belief and medicinal system.

The African cultural background not only influenced and informed the etiological *beliefs* of Barbadian slaves, but also their early healing *practices*, and Africans who came to the New World also would have attempted to adapt their holistic and spiritualistic healing practices to the milieu of plantation slavery. It is clear that slaves were treating themselves from the earliest period of slavery. Although many of the African-born, especially younger ones, probably lacked experience with healing practices in their homelands, others would have brought African techniques for treating ailments known in Africa as well as specific procedures for the diagnosis of illness. Slaves had techniques for treating common problems, such as the extraction of the very lengthy “Guinea worm” and the removal of body lice. They also had techniques (perhaps influenced by Amerindian practices [Handler 1970]) for removing the egg sacs of the omnipresent chigger, whose wounds could be a pathfinder for tetanus and other infections. Barbadian slaves used rum and rum mixtures for various medicinal purposes, and “Barbadoes green tar,” a natural petroleum hydrocarbon found in the island’s Scotland district, was employed for gastrointestinal disorders, muscular aches and bruises, and fresh wounds.<sup>9</sup>

7. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, Extract of a Letter from Governor Parry to the Right Honourable Lord Sydney, August 18, 1788; Cf. part 3, John Brathwaite, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa.

8. See Public Record Office (PRO), London, Colonial Office (CO), Barbados Assembly and Council, 30/18, no. 262, An Act for the Punishment of Such Slaves as Shall be Found Practising Obeah, November 4, 1806; 30/20, no. 367, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, June 28, 1818; 30/20, no. 383, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, May 26, 1819; 28/87, A Case for the Opinion of His Majesty’s Crown Lawyers [concerning the Obeah Trial of Jack, a Slave] December 21, 1818; University of Keele Library, Staffordshire, UK, Raymond Richards Collection of Miscellaneous Historical Material, Minute Book, Society for the Improvement of West India Plantership, June 1, 1811-April 6, 1816.

9. Specific curing treatments, involving natural, mainly herbal, medicines, that were used by Barbados slaves are mentioned in a number of sources (Handler & Jacoby 1993; Handler 1997a). Some slaves, apparently following West African methods, may have inoculated themselves against leprosy or yaws (two diseases often confused with each other in the primary sources). At an early period, bleeding, lancing, and cupping, which were fairly widespread in West African medicine, also may have been employed in Barbados. Cupping is widespread in Afro-Caribbean folk medicine and is still practiced by Maroons in Jamaica and Suriname, “exactly as described by Sloane” (Sloane 1707:liii-liv; Kenneth Bilby, personal communication; cf. Laguerre 1987:30).

The pharmacopoeia that developed, however, was overwhelmingly composed of plant medicines. Both African and European migrants to Barbados, and to other areas of the New World, shared a cultural predisposition to exploit and experiment with the natural, particularly the plant, environment. Like Europeans, Africans who increasingly poured into Barbados during the 1600s and early 1700s were accustomed to employing herbal medicines. Moreover, these immigrants undoubtedly included a variety of male and female healers with skills in the preparation of such medicines. British doctors in Barbados, who themselves laid great emphasis on the curative powers of plants, knew that slaves possessed a herbal pharmacopoeia. "The Negroes," reported Richard Towne (1726:182-92), "are great pretenders to the knowledge of specific virtues in simples." A few decades later, William Hillary (1766:341) observed how "the Negroes have by long observation and experience" discovered a way of treating what he called yaws "with the caustic juices of certain escarotic plants" (cf. Handler & Jacoby 1993).

Despite an abundance of general evidence attesting the importance of plant medicines to African and creole slaves, and whites of all social classes (including professional medical practitioners), it is impossible to give a detailed account of the remedies employed by slaves, and how their plant pharmacopoeia changed through time. The sources usually present only limited ethnobotanical information which is frequently ambiguous or silent in identifying plant use by "racial" group. In quite a few cases both slaves and whites probably used the same plants for similar purposes, and this may have increasingly occurred as the slave period progressed and as the island's creole culture and folk-healing tradition became more firmly established. Although slave self-help involved plant medicines for a wide array of ailments, the sources only vaguely indicate specific treatments or medication (Handler & Jacoby 1993).

Whites probably knew few details about the slaves' pharmacopeia, particularly its ritualistic context. Africans would not have perceived herbal medicines from an entirely or, even in some cases, a partially naturalistic or physical perspective. Probably relatively few early slave medicines, including their ritualistic and symbolic associations, as those in Africa, were "regarded as unambiguously non-magical" (Gillies 1976:381). Moreover, West Africans often believed that herbal medicines could be directed only against the symptoms of an illness, and that its underlying cause (defined in what contemporary Europeans would consider a supernatural idiom) would not be removed until ritualistic measures were taken to restore normalcy.

In common with West Africans and other human communities, Barbadian slaves probably shared a certain amount of general herbal knowledge among themselves, although individuals may have had their own favorite recipes for particular ills. Moreover, conventional treatments probably existed for such frequent ailments as headaches, fevers, diarrhea,

and so forth. Like members of all human communities, Barbadian slaves easily recognized very common ailments. Many of these ailments were probably treated by the patient himself or left to the body's own healing powers. Yet, the slave community also contained specialists in the healing arts, or certain people with particular healing skills. These people tended to be consulted in more serious or intractable cases. Like traditional African healers, they usually, if not always, received a fee for their services.<sup>10</sup>

### SLAVE HEALERS: NEGRO DOCTORS AND OBEAH PRACTITIONERS

Black and white medical practitioners confronted the same broad set of problems: they were to identify or diagnose illness and find a cure for what they diagnosed. Although medical knowledge was not the exclusive domain of specialists in either group, some slaves, like some Europeans, claimed to be, or were considered by others, as more adept at curing in general or in treating particular ailments. The African-born fugitive or runaway, Cuffey Smith, for example, "pretends himself a doctor to cure the leprosy," reported an advertisement in the *Barbados Mercury* of August 28, 1784. George Pinckard (1806:388-90), a British military doctor in Barbados during the 1790s, disparaging a number of white creole doctors, opined that "the very Negro doctors of the estates ... justly vie with them in medical knowledge."

As used by Pinckard, however, the meaning of the term Negro doctor is unclear. Nor is its meaning clarified by other contemporary sources. Negro doctor could have referred to males who were assigned to plantation hospitals or sick houses. Such black doctors, or "hothouse doctors," working under the direction of white doctors, sometimes appear in other West Indian territories. However, "hothouse doctors" do not appear in discussions of Barbados plantation medical facilities or on plantation slave occupational lists (Handler 1997a). Although the term Negro doctor in Barbados may have referred to a medical assistant in a plantation hospital, it appears more likely that it was applied to a different type of practitioner. But what kind of practitioner?

In the 1740s, a British doctor in Jamaica claimed that "Negro doctors" succeeded more frequently "in obtaining cures through their use of hot baths of herbs, or fermentations" (Higman 1984:266). Decades later an English naturalist, reporting on Jamaica's medicinal plants, learned that European doctors "know very little of them but I have known very great cures made by the Negro doctors."<sup>11</sup> As in Jamaica, the so-called Negro doc-

10. Obeah persons in contemporary Barbados also work on behalf of clients who pay for their services in cash or trade (Fisher 1985:107, 133).

11. Linnean Society of London Library, Ellis Manuscripts, Letter from John Ellis, July 26, 1772.

tors in Barbados may have been practitioners specializing in natural remedies, particularly herbal medicines, and were part-time healers, responding to particular calls for their services. Pinckard could have been referring to this kind of person. Sparse evidence indicates that some Barbadian plantations (regularly or occasionally?) employed such doctors. For example, in 1731 the Codrington plantations, owned by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, paid five shillings to a "Negro doctor" for "curing a sick slave" of an unidentified malady (Bennett 1958:40).

The primary sources also suggest that the Negro doctor could also be known as an Obeah person and that the meaning of the word Obeah changed over time. The best evidence for this apparent change comes from the late 1780s. John Brathwaite, the planter who sometimes represented the island's commercial interests in Britain, responded to a query from a British Parliamentary committee, "whether Negroes called Obeah-men or under any other denomination, practicing witchcraft, exist in the island of Barbadoes?", by observing that "Negroes *formerly* called Obeah-men, but *now* more commonly called doctors, do exist in Barbados"<sup>12</sup> (emphasis mine).

At certain periods, whites may have occasionally used the terms "Negro doctor" and "Obeah person" interchangeably. Yet, the sparsity of evidence complicates attempts to understand exactly what the term Obeah meant to blacks and whites and how these meanings may have varied over the several centuries of slavery in Barbados. The Barbados sources can be ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. In the late 1780s, for example, Brathwaite reported the existence of Obeah practitioners, but asserted that during the preceding twenty years their "number has diminished greatly."<sup>13</sup> However, at the same time, the Barbados Council maintained "there is hardly an estate in which there is not some old man or woman who affects to possess some supernatural power. These are called Obeah Negroes."<sup>14</sup>

12. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, John Brathwaite, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa.
13. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, John Brathwaite, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa.
14. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, Barbados Council, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa. As elsewhere in the West Indies, Barbadian Obeah practitioners tended to be men, but, aside from the above quotation, there is unequivocal other evidence that women were also Obeah practitioners (e.g., PRO, CO, Barbados Assembly and Council, 30/18, no. 262, An Act for the Punishment of Such Slaves as Shall be Found Practising Obeah, November 4, 1806; 30/20, no. 367, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, June 28, 1818; 30/20, no. 383 An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, May 26, 1819; 28/27, A Case for the Opinion of His Majesty's Crown Lawyers [Concerning the Obeah Trial of Jack, a Slave] December 21, 1818). There is no way of establishing the proportions of each gender at any given time period, and no information on how practices may have varied by the practitioner's sex.

Above all, the practitioners of Obeah, the “Obeah Negroes,” were considered to possess “supernatural powers.”<sup>15</sup> Slaves stood “much in awe of ... Obeah Negroes,” wrote Griffith Hughes (1750:15-16), “these being a sort of physicians and conjurers, who can, as they believe, not only fascinate them [i.e., bewitch or lay them under a spell], but cure them when they are bewitched by others.” Several decades later John Brathwaite asserted that Obeah practitioners “act now principally as fortune-tellers. Some of them have knowledge in simples, and can apply them with success in the cure of wounds.” He also claimed that with their “knowledge of poisons they would do a great deal of mischief, were they not restrained by their fear of whites.”<sup>16</sup> Whether or not “fear” was, in fact, a restraining influence is impossible to ascertain. Nonetheless, whites, and perhaps slaves as well, considered Obeah persons knowledgeable in making poisons from local flora.

Obeah itself – in contrast to the role of Obeah practitioner – is often mentioned in early writings, but nowhere is it defined, and it is impossible to precisely identify the meaning that black Barbadians attached to the word since it was whites who wrote about it. And, over time, what whites wrote tended to stress the anti-social or evil dimensions of what they perceived Obeah to be. As in other areas of the British Caribbean, whites in Barbados, perhaps reflecting to some degree the usage found among the enslaved, used Obeah as a general or catch-all term for the body of supernatural beliefs and related practices that whites considered non-European in origin, not properly religious, and which slaves employed for both socially positive objectives (e.g., curing illness, finding missing property) and for socially negative ones (e.g., causing death or harm). The word Obeah could also refer to dream interpretation, the making and use of herbal medicines and poisons, and the diagnosis of disease. It could also mean a supernatural force as well as a fetish or charm containing that force or made by an Obeah person to achieve particular ends. For example, a British visitor in the late 1740s learned that

15. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, Barbados Council, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa; cf. David Parry, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa; PRO, CO, Barbados Assembly and Council, 30/18, no. 262, An Act for the Punishment of Such Slaves as Shall be Found Practising Obeah, November 4, 1806.

16. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, John Brathwaite, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa.

Obeah Negroes ... are supposed ... to have the power of inflicting injury or punishment upon such as attempt to rob their plantation or provision ground; for which purpose they tie together old nails, glass, stones, rags, etc., these being put together and tied in a rag, is called the Obeah, and put upon in their provision-patch, as a warning to those who come there to steal from them, that, at their peril, they forbear taking anything away (Poole 1753:300-1).<sup>17</sup>

Over time, whites increasingly emphasized the socially negative when mentioning Obeah and stressed its “evil characteristics,” using the term Obeah for “diabolical superstitions” and related “odious rites” and practices that allegedly involved “communication with the devil and other evil spirits” (Orderson 1842:35). They applied the term to the rituals that slaves conducted over the graves of the dead (Handler & Lange 1978:204-7), and to individuals who claimed any “magical and supernatural charm or power” that could cause injury or death, including the use of poisons.<sup>18</sup> Poison-use, it must be stressed, was not an intrinsic feature of Obeah, and neither the knowledge of poisons nor their application was confined to Obeah practitioners.

The ambiguities and inconsistencies in the Barbados historical sources when the term Obeah is used suggest that there may have been, in fact, several types of slave medical practitioners. These types were not easily recognized by whites who may have uniformly classified under the rubric Obeah what, in fact, slaves recognized as several types of healers. The probable existence of several types of healers in Barbados can be clarified by analogy to the role of traditional healers in colonial-period or contemporary African societies.

Synthesizing reports in the African literature, anthropologist Edward Green distinguishes between “herbalists” and other types of healers, a distinction made by Africans themselves. The *herbalist* learns his craft through an apprenticeship and relies on plant medicines. Although he is relatively “empirical or naturalistic,” he “may occasionally practice a little divination ... or other magicoreligious techniques.” The *herbalist* does not practice evil magic, but he may provide protective magic for clients. The *diviner* diagnoses the cause of illness. Occasionally the *diviner* may use herbal medicines which “are supposed to have spiritual powers,” although some types

17. Another mid-eighteenth-century visitor (Thompson 1770:113-4) also reported “a string of rags” in the fields and its connection with Obeah. Similar protective charms were found in eighteenth-century Jamaica (Bilby 1993:5) and were common in West Africa to prevent theft from fields or homes (e.g., Field 1961:111; Parrinder 1961:162; Ellis 1966a:92 and 1966b:118; Talbot 1967:136; Winterbottom 1969; Thomas 1970:60-63).

18. Boston Public Library, Ms. U.1.2, John B. Colthurst, Journal as a Special Magistrate in the Islands of Barbados and Saint Vincent, July 1835-August 1838. For the range of similar meanings attached to the term Obeah in the present-day Anglophone Caribbean, see Allsopp (1996:412) and Bilby (1993).

of diviners may use herbal medicines quite regularly. A third type of healer, the *sorcerer-healer*, may cure illness as well as attempt to cause it. Because he willingly can use magic to cause harm, "the sorcerer-healer tends to elicit emotional ambivalence and even mistrust or fear by at least a portion of the communities he serves ... and tends to be more secretive about his healing knowledge." The sorcerer-healer can be enlisted to counter the evil actions of a witch or sorcerer or to "exorcise an evil spirit that possesses a patient"; sometimes herbal medicines are used as part of the treatment as well.<sup>19</sup>

Whether these several types actually existed in Barbados cannot be definitely established. Yet, when whites referred to Obeah practitioners, on the one hand, as Negro doctors, implying socially beneficial healers, and, on the other, as "a set of miscreants" engaged in "wicked acts" they were indicating several types of slave medical roles.<sup>20</sup> And when divination took place whites may have often confused or badly misunderstood its role in healing.

As noted above, the planter John Brathwaite identified the Obeah practitioner as a "fortune teller"; in so doing, he pointed to divination, a universal human practice and one of fundamental importance to African medicine as well as the self-help system of Barbadian slaves. Virtually no details exist on the practice of divination in Barbados and the instruments used by diviners. Yet, some reasonable inferences can be made from what is known about divination more generally in human societies and particularly in West Africa. Divination allows people to control chance and minimize ambiguity in their lives so that important decisions can be made under favorable circumstances. It also permits finding lost objects or discovering hidden or special knowledge, such as the causes of illness or other types of misfortune. Just as a seventeenth-century English astrologer could advise ship owners about insuring their ships, young women about marital partners, or military leaders on battle plans, so the African diviner could provide reliable predictions, give advice on the conduct of daily life, and reveal past events. The diagnosis of disease is crucial to divination in Africa, and the diviner's immediate objective is to ascertain the cause of the illness and then prescribe appropriate healing rituals and treatment. Since divination is considered so indispen-

19. Green 1980:502-3; cf. Cardinall 1920:46; Parrinder 1961:137; Gelfand 1964:40-54; Meredith 1967:188, 233; Ayensu 1981:88; Iwu 1988:23; Makinde 1988:88-89; Peek 1991:3. Also, Chambers 1997:88-90, for the role of the *ndi obea* or *dibia* of pre-colonial Igbo land.

20. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, Extract of a Letter from Governor Parry to the Right Honourable Lord Sydney, August 18, 1788; PRO, CO, Barbados Assembly and Council, 30/18, no. 262, An Act for the Punishment of Such Slaves as Shall be Found Practising Obeah, November 4, 1806; 30/20, no. 367, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, June 28, 1818; 30/20, no. 383, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, May 26, 1819.

sable in African life, the diviner is considered a social asset and generally enjoys respect and honor within his community.<sup>21</sup>

Divination falls within the larger domain of magic. Among African peoples, as among Barbadian and other Caribbean slaves, an intimate relationship existed between magic and medicine. In its broadest sense, magic is a way of understanding and influencing the natural world or events through the intermediary of the supernatural. Magic assumes that certain objectives cannot be achieved by human action alone, and that the natural world can be influenced or directed by the manipulation of supernatural forces or power. Although magic has its negative or anti-social side, most magic is oriented toward the social good, such as bringing rain or good luck, protecting against evil, and healing illness. The belief system of Barbadian slaves displayed these characteristics of magic, and magical practices were frequently an intrinsic feature of the curing activities of Barbadian practitioners.

Whatever the practices, there were probably slaves in Barbados whose roles were similar to the “herbalists” or “diviners” described above. Such persons were identified as “Negro doctors” in some historical sources and as Obeah persons in others. Some people, called Obeah practitioners in the sources, provided socially beneficial activities, but also engaged in anti-social actions and may have had roles similar to the “sorcerer-healer.” In addition, the slave community may have included individuals who were considered neither Negro doctors nor Obeah people, but rather, as in African communities, individuals who were “gifted ordinary people with the secrets to cure some specific intractable disease” (Iwu 1988:26). Cuffey Smith, the fugitive slave described in the *Barbados Mercury* (August 28, 1784), who “pretends himself a doctor to cure the leprosy,” may have been such an individual.

There is no information on how people became Obeah practitioners, “Negro doctors,” or other types of healers, or how such people learned or developed their skills, and whether some type of apprenticeship system, however informal, existed. In the earliest phases of its development, however, what came to be called Obeah probably emerged from the activities of

21. For divination in Africa and comments that are equally applicable to Barbadian slave life, see, for example, Parrinder 1961:137; Gelfand 1964; Horton 1967:53; Mair 1969:241-44; Feierman 1979:279; Green 1980:499; Iwu 1988:22, 31; Makinde 1988:6-7; Peek 1991:3. A Barbados law imposed a whipping on any slave “pretending to have the power of divination ... or practice what is commonly called fortune telling,” including those claiming “to possess the charm or power of discovering or leading to the discovery of any lost or stolen goods, articles, or things” (HofC, PP, 25 [1826-27] Barbados Assembly and Council, *An Act to Repeal Several Acts and Clauses of Acts Respecting Slaves*, clause 38, October 1826). Theft of crops from plantation fields or the small gardens cultivated by slaves was common, and it can be inferred from this law that slave diviners were employed to find stolen goods. African diviners were commonly called upon to locate lost objects or livestock or to discover thieves (Iwu 1988:23).

various types of African healers, or people who were apprenticing to be healers before they were captured. They came from various ethno-linguistic groups and applied their knowledge and traditions as best they could in the New World. In the early eighteenth century, Thomas Walduck, referring to Obeah practitioners, wrote that “no Negro that was born in Barbados can do anything of this, only those that are brought from the coast of Africa,”<sup>22</sup> and by the mid-1700s, when Barbados had many more creole slaves, Africans continued to be prominent among Obeah persons. However, by the late 1780s, when most slaves – perhaps as many as 86 percent – were creoles, Obeah “professors are as often natives as Africans.”<sup>23</sup> As time passed and as the slave trade brought fewer Africans to Barbados, creole slaves came to predominate; ultimately all Obeah people were Barbados-born. In 1818, for example, when the legislature passed a new anti-Obeah law, only about 7 percent of Barbadian slaves were born in Africa and one must assume that at this time most Obeah people were creoles.<sup>24</sup> By this period, whites viewed Obeah entirely in negative terms; it was considered among the most “heinous and grievous crimes.”<sup>25</sup>

### THE OBEAH PRACTITIONER

“Of their arts,” reported the Barbados Council, “we know nothing.”<sup>26</sup> Concurring, Brathwaite stressed that Obeah practitioners “take care to keep secret their supposed art, particularly from the whites.”<sup>27</sup> In earlier years, Dr. William Hillary (1766:341) had also reported that slave healers in general kept “secret from the white people” a treatment they had for yaws, “but preserve [it] among themselves by tradition.” African healers often keep their rituals and medical ingredients to themselves and do “not reveal their

22. BL, Sloane Manuscripts 2302, Letters from Thomas Walduck to James Petiver, November 1710-September 1712.

23. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, Barbados Council, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa; cf. John Brathwaite, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa; Handler & Lange 1978:29.

24. PRO, CO, Barbados Assembly and Council, 30/20, no. 367, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, June 28, 1818; Barbados 28/26, An Abstract Account of the Slave Population of this Island, Taken from the Registration Books, October 31, 1817.

25. PRO, CO, 28/87, Letter from Governor Combermere to Lord Bathurst [Concerning the Obeah Trial of Jack, a Slave] December 28, 1818.

26. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, Barbados Council, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa.

27. HofC, PP, 26, part 3, John Brathwaite, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa.

secrets to anyone" (Makinde 1988:91; cf. Iwu 1988:13). While Obeah practitioners in Barbados (as elsewhere in the Caribbean; cf. Frey & Wood 1998:57-58) were probably following a basically African pattern in their secrecy, this pattern was surely strengthened by the conditions of plantation slavery, the highly negative way in which whites viewed Obeah (including the laws passed against it), and the general alienation of slaves from whites. In any case, throughout Barbadian history undoubtedly very few whites actually witnessed the Obeah practitioner at work, and this may partially explain the confusion in the sources.

Thomas Walduck, however, claims to have observed the practice of Obeah. "Some of ye Negroes are a sort of magician," he wrote, "and I have seen suprizing things done by them ... their manner of bewitching is the same we read of in books, by having images of clay, wax, dust," and then inserting into these

pins, old iron, tobacco pipes in several parts according as they design to grieve the patient; strings tied about the image's forehead, the middle joints, and other parts. Basket[s]ful of such trumphy I have took away from them upon searching their houses and burnt them.<sup>28</sup>

In this passage, Walduck is not only alluding to imitative magic (i.e., "like produces like"), but also is describing the work of a type of African healer, perhaps a diviner or "sorcerer-healer," in any case one who anthropologists would call a shaman. As a part-time religious specialist, the shaman is primarily involved in the diagnosis and cure of illness although he sometimes causes illness as well. When Hughes described Obeah practitioners as being "physicians and conjurers" who can "fascinate" or bewitch slaves as well as cure them he was also implying a shaman-type role. Some of the practices Walduck describes or alludes to, and which neither he nor Hughes appear to have fully understood, are strongly reminiscent of West African practices. To help cure or prevent illness, West African healers use a wide array of common-place objects, such as eggshells, seeds, feathers, shells, iron, herbs and roots, clay, wax, string, and animal bones; in some cases, tying knots in string or cutting string in pieces is associated with evil. The objects used by healers are the "magical apparatus" that control or contain the supernatural force that is believed to actually perform the desired cure.<sup>29</sup>

In the mid-eighteenth century, Hughes (1750:15) observed how Barbadian slaves "are very tenaciously addicted to the rites, ceremonies,

28. BL, Sloane Manuscripts 2302, Letters from Thomas Walduck to James Petiver, November 1710-September 1712.

29. Field 1961:111, 120, 128; cf. Cardinall 1920:49; Rattray 1927:46 and 1932:314-16; Parrinder 1961:157, 161; Kingsley 1964:144.

and superstitions of their own countries"; even the creoles, he stressed, "cannot be entirely weaned from these customs." To illustrate, Hughes emphasized the influence of Obeah practitioners and what he perceived as the gullibility of their patients. He provides a relatively rich description of a practitioner who attempted to cure a "Negro woman" troubled by "rheumatic pains." In this description, Hughes supplies a clear example of African-derived medicinal beliefs and practices:

The woman was persuaded by one of these Obeah doctors, that she was bewitched, and that these pains were owing to several pieces of glass, rusty nails, and splinters of sharp stones, that were lodged in the different parts of her body; adding, that it was in his power, if paid for it to cure her, by extracting these from her through the navel. Upon the payment of the stipulated praemium, he produced his magical apparatus, being two earthen basons, a handful of different kinds of leaves, and a piece of soap. In one of these basons he made a strong lather, in the other he put the bruised herbs; then clapping these with one hand to the navel, and pouring the suds by degrees upon them, he stroked the parts most affected with the other hand, always ending towards the navel.[30] In a short time after, thrusting his finger and thumb into the cataplasm of herbs, he produced several pieces of broken glass, nails and splinters of stones (which he had before artfully conveyed among the bruised herbs).

In a similar vein, several decades earlier Walduck reported how he had

knowne upon Negros complaining that they are bewitched an Obia Negro hath taken out of their eyes bones, shells out of their thighs, pieces of iron out of their bellys, and such odd things out of other parts that I have admired at it, but by what legerdemain I could never discover, having been careful to search them before.<sup>31</sup>

And during the late 1750s a visiting British naval officer learned of similar practices from a Barbadian physician who had "many African Negroes brought to him in the hypocondriack state which neither medicine nor advice could palliate." In such cases, the physician "had no other recourse" and would send

30. Here, the Obeah man is following a West African practice of "washing away sickness" (Field 1961:122; cf., for example, Little 1951:234-35; Winterbottom 1969: 25, 223).

31. BL, Sloane Manuscripts 2302, Letters from Thomas Walduck to James Petiver, November 1710-September 1712.

for a Negro priest who would persuade the patient, after having exercised a number of legerdemain tricks, that he had extracted toads, serpents and birds from his body, which being concealed about him he produces them at pleasure; after such an operation, you'll see the superstitious wretch revive, and in a few days, return in spirits to his labour (Thompson 1770:113-14).

The naval officer implied that the "Negro priests" were charlatans, and was certain that their patients were "superstitious." Hughes, too, had no doubt about the chicanery of Obeah people and the credulousness of those who patronized them. In fact, Hughes related the story of the rheumatoid slave woman to illustrate how "Obeah Negroes get a good livelihood by the folly and ignorance of the rest of the Negroes." Some Obeah practitioners in Barbados, like some traditional healers in Africa, may have been "unscrupulous opportunists" who unethically profited from their patients by "promising cures for any affliction" (Green 1980:501). The Obeah man described by Hughes may have been such a person. However, it is just as likely, if not more so, that he was merely engaging in actions not understood by Hughes or other white contemporaries, and that are common among African healers (as well as shamans in other parts of the world), that is, providing "manipulative treatment by which material objects are believed to be extracted from the body of the patient" (Royal Anthropological Institute 1954:190). European criticisms of traditional healers in contemporary Africa for engaging in "mumbo-jumbo incantations" and "hocus pocus" (Iwu 1988:9; cf. Meredith 1967:234; Mair 1969: 246-48) are similar to white criticisms of slave healers in Barbados. Yet, based on a fundamental premise of holistic healing wherein "both psychosomatic and somatic dimensions of health are important," for the African healer "what is perhaps as important as objective symptom removal is that the patient *thinks* that he is better" (Green 1980:493; emphasis in original). "The patient's mind and soul as well as body are considered together during treatment," writes the Nigerian physician Maurice Iwu (1988:11), and cures can be achieved because of the "personality of the physician, his power of persuasion and the faith the patient has in his treatment."

#### EVIL MAGIC: WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

Because Barbadian slaves, as with Africans in Africa, profoundly believed that misfortune was caused primarily by supernatural forces that acted through human agents, evil magic was a major factor in their lives. Evil magic falls into two broad and related categories, traditionally called by many anthropologists witchcraft and sorcery. The distinction between these

categories is often not clear cut in actual practice and is not universally accepted by anthropologists.<sup>32</sup> However, for purposes of this paper and because of its reliance on often sparse historical data the distinction is loosely followed to direct attention to certain characteristics of Obeah. In sorcery, magic is consciously and knowingly performed to injure others. Sorcerers acquire their magical knowledge through learning; theoretically their techniques can be carried out by anyone with the requisite knowledge and skill. It is important to emphasize that in sorcery, like socially beneficial magic, there is actual performance, such as rituals, recitation of spells, and, particularly, the use and manipulation of material objects or substances. The negative powers that whites in Barbados often ascribed to Obeah practitioners and sometimes identified as "witchcraft" in the sources could be more appropriately labelled as sorcery.

The power of the witch is usually, although not always, inborn or inherited. This power cannot be learned; it resides within the individual and is directed against others for evil purposes. It is frequently believed that "the witch need merely wish to harm his victim and his witchcraft then does this, or it may be enough for him to merely feel annoyance or jealousy against someone for the power to set itself in operation without his being aware of the fact that it has done so."<sup>33</sup> Witchcraft, then, is a psychic or mental act whose believers affirm that the harmful power of the witch is unleashed merely through the activation of certain negative thoughts.

Anthropological discussions of African witchcraft/sorcery shed light on at least some Barbadian Obeah practitioners and believers in a way that naive and ethnocentric contemporary white observers in Barbados could not. Following the classic study of witchcraft by E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1957), Max Gluckman (1955:103-4) observes how in African societies

witches are believed to cause illness by shooting objects into their victim; the doctor should extract these objects to effect a cure. Of course, doctors produce these objects by sleight of hand in poultices or by concealing them in their mouths. But not even the doctor doubts the belief as such. He regrets only that he does not possess the magic ... to enable him really to extract the noxious object. Meantime, he has to pretend to do this extraction for that peace of mind of the patient which is necessary for recovery.

Europeans often branded such African medical practitioners "charlatans exploiting a credulous population," writes Lucy Mair (1969:246-48), but "their function in providing an explanation of the sickness is far more important than this supposedly curative action. Even more significant is the

32. For a classic argument against this distinction, see Turner 1964; also, for example, Geschiere 1997:225n1, 230n32.

33. Middleton & Winter 1963:3, 8, 12; cf. Royal Anthropological Institute 1954:188-89; Mair 1969:245.

reflection that people cannot do without a recourse of some kind in difficulties for which they know no technical solution.” Sorcery and witchcraft help explain injury, bad luck, and illness, and witchcraft beliefs, in particular, account for specific types of misfortune which are not felt to have come about simply by chance or coincidence. Witchcraft “is concerned with the singularity of misfortune”; it “does not explain the whole of any misfortune. Every misfortune has its empirical side.” As a “theory of causation” witchcraft does not deny, for example, that people can become ill from eating certain foods, “but it explains why some of them fall ill at some times and not at other times” (Gluckman 1955:83-85, 92; cf. Middleton & Winter 1963:10, 20; Mbiti 1969:261-62).

Not only does African witchcraft explain certain types of misfortune, it also points to categories of people who might be witches. These persons are universally despised, and it is a commonplace anthropological observation that Africans regard a witch as being everything a good person should not be. Misfortunes can be attributed to these persons, and the search for the witch, or the witchhunt, becomes an important process in societies with witchcraft beliefs. Not only do accusations of witchcraft/sorcery reflect tensions in social relationships, but accusations and witchcraft beliefs in general “are the source of many disharmonies and quarrels” within small communities (Gluckman 1955:100-1); they can be “an aggravator of all hostilities and fears [and] an obstacle to peaceful cooperation.”<sup>34</sup>

Barbadian slaves were certainly vulnerable to illness and various types of misfortune, to say nothing of the system that enslaved them and which circumscribed, stressed, and constrained their daily lives. Moreover, the tensions and antagonisms within plantation communities were manifest in interpersonal conflicts, such as accusations of theft or fights and stabbings (Handler 1997c), and were reflected in several early-nineteenth-century laws making Obeah a capital offense. These laws attributed a large number of slave deaths, serious illness, and injuries to the evil powers of Obeah practitioners and surely reflected to some extent information transmitted by slaves themselves.<sup>35</sup>

34. Douglas 1963:141; cf., Marwick 1963:3; Middleton & Winter 1963:20-21; Kennedy 1969; Edgerton 1992:71-72, 172.

35. PRO, CO, Barbados Assembly and Council, 30/18, no. 262, An Act for the Punishment of Such Slaves as Shall be Found Practising Obeah, November 4, 1806; 30/20, no. 367, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, June 28, 1818; 30/20, no. 383, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, May 26, 1819; HofC, PP 25, An Act to Repeal Several Acts and Clauses of Acts Respecting Slaves, October 1826. The earliest anti-Obeah law was passed in 1806. Justifying the need for this law, Barbados’ governor reported that although “Obeah has existed time out of mind” in Barbados, it “was never considered a crime which could be punished by any existing law ... and it was thought necessary to pass an act for the punishment of it” (PRO, CO 28/87, A Case for the Opinion of His Majesty’s Crown Lawyers [Concerning the Obeah Trial of Jack, a Slave], December 21, 1818). The Barbadian historian Karl

Although sorcery/witchcraft was undeniably a component of Obeah, as the system developed over time whites greatly exaggerated its anti-social dimensions and minimized its positive functions in the slave community. Walduck, in alluding to the curative powers of Obeah (see above) also pointed to its negative aspects. “That one Negro can bewitch another (Obia as they call it),” he wrote, “every day makes appear [sic] ... [and] that one Negro can torment another is beyond doubt, by sending an unaccountable pains [sic] in different parts of their body, lameness, madness, loss of speech, lose the use of all their limbs without any paine.”<sup>36</sup> Some twenty years later, Arthur Holt, the Anglican rector of Christ Church parish, reflecting the view of many whites, reported that

the Oby Negroes, or conjurers, are the leaders to whom the others are in slavery for fear of being bewitched, from whom they often receive charms to make them successful in any vilenies, and to get deadly doses to dispatch out of the world such masters or other persons as they have conceived a dislike of.”<sup>37</sup>

Whites continued to view Obeah in entirely negative terms throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>38</sup> By the early nineteenth century, when anti-Obeah laws had been passed in some other areas of the British Caribbean,<sup>39</sup> and when Barbados’ Governor Combermere reported that Obeah was “a growing evil” on the island, the Barbados legislature for the first time made Obeah a major felony, punishable by death if it caused the death of any slave, or transportation from the island if poison was administered to a slave that did not result in death. The law asserted that “many slaves have lost their lives or have otherwise been materially injured in their health by the wicked acts ... of Obeahmen and women pretending to have commun-

Watson (1979: 88, 97n.107) errs when he says this law replaced one enacted in the eighteenth century; in any event, I can find no trace of this earlier law, and Watson’s source citation is inadequate for corroboration. For the relationship between Obeah beliefs (conceived of in terms of malevolent forces) and tensions in contemporary Barbadian villages, see Fisher 1985:114-21.

36. BL, Sloane Manuscripts 2302, Letters from Thomas Walduck to James Petiver, November 1710-September 1712.

37. Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Archives, London, Letter Books, Series B, vol. 6, 62, Letter from Arthur Holt to Henry Newman, February 18, 1729.

38. E.g., Hughes 1750:15-16; Duke 1786:12-13; HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, David Parry, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of Trade to Africa; Barbados Council, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of Trade to Africa, 1789.

39. Sheridan 1985:78-79; PRO, CO 28/87, Letter from Governor Combermere to Lord Bathurst [Concerning the Obeah Trial of Jack, a Slave], December 28, 1818.

cation with the devil and other evil spirits.”<sup>40</sup> Another law, passed twelve years later because the earlier one was “ineffectual,” attempted to more rigorously penalize those who would “injure and affect the life or health of any other person.” Under the major 1826 “slave consolidation act,” the “wicked and unlawful practice of Obeah” continued as a major felony and poison was still mentioned as a characteristic of the Obeah practitioner.<sup>41</sup> Despite these laws, slave deaths continued to be attributed to Obeah. As late as 1830, just several years before emancipation and when virtually every Barbadian slave was born on the island, one planter consoled another at the “loss of your two men from Obeah.”<sup>42</sup>

Social science and medical literature has well established that a person who deeply believes that he or she is the object of a sorcerer’s or witch’s spell, curse, or other action can acquire “an incapacitating anxiety which, if not relieved, can manifest physical symptoms”; “fear makes the victim psychologically vulnerable, and this in turn affects physical health” with physiological changes ultimately leading to illness or death (Davis 1988:198-207; cf. Kennedy 1969:175-76). Barbadian slaves, heavily influenced by their African backgrounds and profound beliefs in witchcraft /sorcery also succumbed to evil magic and displayed symptoms that conformed to the wider pattern of psychogenic illness. For example, Robert Poole (1753:300-1) an English doctor who visited Barbados for about three months in the late 1740s, learned that “Obeah men have had a sort of bewitching power, in inflicting injuries upon others.” He describes two cases in which slaves succumbed to psychogenic illness.<sup>43</sup> Around the same time, Hughes (1750:16) observed how “once a Negro believes that he is

40. PRO, CO 28/87, A Case for the Opinion of His Majesty’s Crown Lawyers [Concerning the Obeah Trial of Jack, a Slave], December 21, 1818.

41. PRO, CO 30/18, no.262, An Act for the Punishment of Such Slaves as Shall be Found Practising Obeah, November 4, 1806; 30/20, no. 367, An Act for the Better Prevention of the Practise of Obeah, June 28, 1818; HofC, PP, 25, An Act to Repeal Several Acts and Clauses of Acts Respecting Slaves, October 1826.

42. National Westminster Bank, London, Charles Cave’s Letter Book, 1815-1836, Letter to L.J. Cumberbatch, April 22, 1830.

43. In the first case a “young Negro woman” accidentally stepped in a puddle of water near the provision ground or garden of an alleged Obeah man. The water (or something in it?) had been magically treated and was intended to harm a slave man on the plantation who was suspected of stealing from the provision ground. Upon stepping in the water, the woman “was taken with a sudden disorder in a manner she could not describe, but ... she felt as tho her soul was going from her.” Growing worse, the woman returned home, and a white doctor was called. She could only give “an imperfect account” of her ailment, repeating that when she stepped into the water “she immediately felt her heart sink in her, and partly die away.” Medical care and treatment went to “no purpose, for tho’ healthy and strong before, yet she wasted away extremely fast and died” (Poole 1753:300-1). (That a person could inadvertently become the victim of evil magic intended for someone else has been reported for West Africa [e.g., Field 1977:123].)

bewitched, the notion is so strongly riveted in his mind, that medicines seldom availing, he usually lingers till death puts an end to his fears." John Brathwaite characterized Obeah victims by their "loss of appetite, great listlessness, languor and debility ... declaring frequently that they are bewitched, and going moping about all day long; hence obstructions, swellings of the extremities, tympany, death."<sup>44</sup>

Whatever the actual clinical symptoms and etiology, the number of deaths and injuries attributed to Obeah is impossible to quantify. Poisoning appears to have accounted for some of these deaths, but without question Obeah also killed or injured through psychosomatic processes. Thus, fear, although perhaps not on as massive a scale as whites claimed, must have played a role in the influence held by *some* Obeah practitioners. In this sense, then, they would have conformed to a more general pattern found in many traditional healing systems. Since such systems often involve "considerable management of supernatural forces," a widespread, albeit realistic, fear exists that healers who are able to control supernatural forces through their own private efforts "may use such potent forces for antisocial as well as helpful purposes" (Rubel & Hass 1990:126-27).<sup>45</sup>

The second case involved "a very strong, able, good Negro." This man "began to grow thin, and fail in his stomach." When his master inquired of his condition, the slave could only say that "he must die," but offered no reason why. The slave grew worse. Concerned about losing such valuable property, the master insisted the slave provide details, giving his assurance that if he had stolen anything the master would make restitution. At first the slave denied theft, but then admitted having "taken something from an Obeah man's ground; that he saw the Obeah after he had taken what he did, and he was sure he should die." The same master owned the Obeah man, and asked him what he had put in his provision ground. Although denying that he had placed any charms or other magical objects, the Obeah man nonetheless complained that vegetables had been stolen from his field. The master insisted the Obeah man had done something to make his slave ill, and brought the slave and the Obeah man together. Threatening to hang the latter should the sick slave die, the master insisted that the Obeah man "use his utmost endeavors to recover the other." The master left the two slaves alone, and although he could not learn what the Obeah man did, "to his great joy and satisfaction, ... his Negro again recovered." For psychogenic illness or death in West Africa, see, for example, Connolly 1896:149-50; Field 1961:115,159; Parrinder 1961:169; Kingsley 1964:137-38; Talbot 1967:138.

44. HofC, PP, 26, 1789, part 3, John Brathwaite, Replies to Queries in Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council ... Concerning the Present State of the Trade to Africa.

45. Given such beliefs, the ritualistic power of some Obeahmen could be translated into political leadership and resistance to/aggression against white authority – surely one major reason why whites found Obeah so objectionable and threatening. Throughout the West Indies, Obeahmen were alleged to have prominent roles in slave revolts and conspiracies, and, especially in the earlier periods, those dominated by Akan speakers from the Gold Coast; in Barbados, such may have been the case in an aborted plot in 1675 (Schuler 1970:16-17; Handler 1982:16; Gaspar 1985:246-49; Bilby 1993:6; cf. Richardson 1997, for the impact of Obeah and revolts on British literature in the eighteenth century).

## OBEAH PRACTITIONERS AND HEALERS IN THE SLAVE COMMUNITY

Although certain Obeah practitioners were held capable of seriously injuring people or causing their deaths, these same practitioners could withdraw spells to make people feel better. In one of the cases reported by Poole the same Obeahman accused of inflicting harm was called upon to cure his alleged victim, and Walduck emphatically reported "that one (Obia) Witchnegro can cure another is believed here as our country folk do in England."<sup>46</sup> These comments reflect a widespread feature in magico-religious medical systems such as were found in Africa and among Barbadian slaves: the person who knows how to cure an illness can also cause that same illness. Such a person can exert great power in his community. Although there is little information on the specific influences that Obeah people had in their plantation settlements, it is difficult to accept that their influence was based solely on intimidation and fear, as contemporary white writers claimed, any more than Obeah was a system that was entirely or primarily anti-social, as plantation authorities and whites in general almost universally stressed.

Despite how much whites emphasized Obeah's anti-social aspects, Obeah practitioners, some of whom may have been identified as "Negro doctors" at certain periods, played positive roles within the black community. They were sought for their divination abilities, proficiency at diagnosing and healing illness, finding missing property, and their powers to help avenge wrongs, *including those inflicted by slavemasters*. Very importantly, slaves consulted Obeah practitioners to protect them "from any evils that might otherwise happen."<sup>47</sup> Obeah persons, like African medicine men, prepared charms or amulets that could protect against illness or harm, ward off evil, bring good luck, or protect against theft of crops or personal belongings. Obeah people could counter the effects of sorcery/witchcraft,

After Barbados' one major slave revolt in 1816, and based on what was heard on the island about slave plots and revolts elsewhere in the Caribbean, an 1818 anti-Obeah law provided that Obeah practitioners who used their powers to "promote" slave rebellion were to be executed or transported from the island. An 1806 law, Governor Combermere reported, failed to include "cases where Obeah men or women might use the influence of their art, for the promotion of insurrection and rebellion" (PRO, CO 28/87, A Case for the Opinion of His Majesty's Crown Lawyers [Concerning the Obeah Trial of Jack, a Slave], December 21, 1818.). There is no evidence, however, that Obeah people had leadership roles or participated in the 1816 revolt (Beckles 1987:97).

46. BL, Sloane Manuscripts 2302, Letters from Thomas Walduck to James Petiver, November 1710-September 1712.

47. PRO, CO, Barbados Assembly and Council, 30/18, no. 262, An Act for the Punishment of Such Slaves as Shall be Found Practising Obeah, November 4, 1806.

perhaps even immunize people against these evil practices, and cure the physical disorders and psychological states or moods intimately linked to beliefs in witchcraft/sorcery. Not all Obeah people could do all of the above, and different practitioners may have specialized in one or more functions – as occurs in West Africa – but such details are lacking in the sources.

In African communities, the healer or medicine man was highly respected (e.g., Gelfand 1964:47; Iwu 1988:12; Makinde 1988:6-7). Because many Barbadian "Negro doctors" and "Obeah Negroes," the "Negro priests" referred to by one British visitor (Thompson 1770:113-14), had access to supernatural forces, could make people feel better, and sometimes cause harm, they were important and influential members of the slave community. In the antebellum American South, as described by Raboteau (1978:33, 276), the position of the conjurer (who had "extensive knowledge" of magic and herbal medicine) seems to fit very closely the position held by the Obeah person in Barbadian slave communities: "The conjurer, as a man of power – and supernatural power at that – enjoyed a measure of authority in the slave community directly proportional to belief in his power ... he was respected and feared by those blacks and whites who had implicit faith in his power." How Barbadian slaves allocated prestige to different types of healers, however, cannot be ascertained, although archaeological evidence from a slave cemetery suggests that certain types of supernatural specialists were accorded special burials that reflected the esteem in which they were held by the slave community.<sup>48</sup>

For the entirety of the slave period, most Barbadian slaves probably felt far more comfortable with their own healers than with white/European medical practitioners. In any case, the latter did not become significantly involved with slave medical treatment until fairly late in the slave period, during the late 1700s and early 1800s, and then usually only in the most sporadic and superficial way (Handler 1997a). Although there is no direct evidence on how slaves viewed white medical practitioners, there certainly was a great social distance between black and white, unlike the proximate relationship slaves had with their own healers. The latter shared the slaves' experiences and problems, and thus were in a better position to understand in the slaves' own cultural idiom what ailed them and what to do about such ailments. Contemporary rural Africans prefer traditional healers to European-trained doctors for similar reasons. The attitude of Barbadian slaves also probably generally resembled the uneasiness many working-class and poor Englishmen felt toward their own medical profession in earlier centuries (Hill 1974:166; Makinde 1988:103). For slaves, this distance

48. Handler 1997b. Another, albeit quite different, burial excavated from the same plantation cemetery may have been that of a witch or sorceress. If so, it provides a unique New World archaeological example of how African customs relating to negative magic and witchcraft were also manifest in mortuary behavior (Handler 1996).

probably involved feelings of discomfort and alienation, even suspicion and mistrust of the white people whose healing abilities, on balance, were probably no better, or in many cases even worse, than what the slave community provided for itself.

### CONCLUSION

The New World environment, including the socio-psychological stress of the slave system and plantation life as well as the pervasiveness of illness and disease, was conducive to the continuation of African-derived etiological beliefs and medical practices. African cultural influences undeniably shaped and heavily influenced the development of slave medicine in Barbados. What was called Obeah formed part of this medical complex even though Europeans who wrote about it often confused and misunderstood many of its features. For whites, Obeah became a catchall term for a range of supernatural-related behaviors that were not of European origin. Whatever beliefs and practices they included in the term Obeah, for the enslaved in Barbados (as elsewhere in the British Caribbean) it was a complex based on "spiritual power" that was "inherently neutral."<sup>49</sup> Although Obeah was largely oriented toward socially beneficial goals such as healing, locating missing property, and protection against illness and other kinds of misfortune, it could also have negative or anti-social dimensions. Yet, the entirely negative view of Obeah that whites largely emphasized during the period of slavery (probably exacerbated by the fact that it was sometimes directed against them), and that has endured until the present day, has distorted the social role that Obeah played in the lives of many enslaved Barbadians, whether of African or New World birth. And the same primary sources that provide information on Obeah and emphasize its evil nature often indicate, albeit indirectly or implicitly, that this view was not entirely shared by the slaves. Bilby's (1993:3) general observation holds for Barbados as well as other areas of the Caribbean:

49. Bilby 1993:14; cf. Curtin 1955:29 who writes about Jamaica: "essentially, obeah was neither good nor bad: it could be used either way."

Europeans' interpretations of obeah were shaped not only by their racialist ideologies and their own cultural concepts of witchcraft, but by the limited opportunities they had to gain information about it ... Viewing slave religion through this distorted lens, the European colonists constructed a myopic, thoroughly negative theory of obeah, reducing it to a kind of virulent witchcraft augmented by the use of poisons ... So deeply ingrained has this misinterpretation of the nature of obeah become that it is now accepted to varying degrees by Caribbean peasants themselves.<sup>50</sup>

Slave medicine, including the practices associated with Obeah and the meaning of the term itself, changed over the two centuries of plantation slavery in Barbados. However, the task of charting these changes is immensely difficult because of the paucity, ambiguity, and superficiality of the available information and the ethnocentrism and racism of the writers who produced it. Although Obeah cannot be considered a religion as such (cf. Bilby 1993:14), and never developed into a well-defined system with an integrated set of beliefs and practices of cult groups comparable to Santería in Cuba or Voodoo in St. Domingue,<sup>51</sup> eighteenth-century Voodoo

50. Contemporary historical scholarship also often tends to stress the anti-social dimensions of Obeah, relying too heavily on the Eurocentric perspectives of the primary sources, or on secondary sources which convey this position. For example, Patterson (1967:188) writes "Obeah was essentially a type of sorcery which largely involved harming others at the request of clients"; for Watts (1987:545n18) "Obeah was a type of sorcery or witchcraft, which may be broadly equated with West African 'bad medicine'"; and Raboteau (1978:34) defines Obeah as the "use of magic for evil" (see also, for example, Bennett 1958:22, 80; Genovese 1972:171-72; Watson 1979:87-88; Sheridan 1985:78-79; Dirks 1987:153-57; Richardson 1997). For perspectives that tend to emphasize the socially positive in Obeah, see, for example, Brathwaite 1971:162, 219; Higman 1984:271-72; Chambers 1997:88-90; Fry & Wood 1998:57-58 and, especially, Bilby 1993. Some of Sereno's (1948) discussion of the positive aspects of Obeah in the late colonial period is relevant to the slave era.

Barbadian culture has changed considerably over the past several decades and Obeah does not play the role that it did in earlier times. Yet, in contemporary Barbados, particularly among the lower or working class, belief in the occult persists, and Obeah is viewed as fundamentally evil. Its practitioners, it is believed, have the power to harm and control people, and misfortune, including mental illness, can be explained in terms of an Obeah spell. Despite this emphasis on malevolence, Obeah can also be used for socially beneficial purposes such as healing or giving assistance in other areas of life (Sutton 1969, cited in Fisher 1985:105; Watson 1979:87-88; Fisher 1985:106-7, 132; Gmelch & Gmelch 1997:145-46).

51. Myalism was an eighteenth-century Jamaican cult that functioned to counteract the influences of witchcraft/sorcery. There is no evidence, however, that such a group, either in name or practice, ever existed in Barbados. Nor does it appear to have existed in other areas of the Anglophone Caribbean. Contemporary writers, however, commonly assume such to be the case based on discussions of Jamaica. It is simply not true, as asserted by Abrahams and Szwed (1983:138), for example, that myal is mentioned "by nearly every observer of West Indian life at one time or another," although their comment may be generally applicable to Jamaica. For a lengthy discussion of myalism and an intelligent challenge to customary scholarly interpretations of it, see Bilby 1993:26-33.

offers an analogy for understanding what may have occurred in Barbadian Obeah. David Geggus (1992:30) speculates "that what eighteenth-century French colonists called Voodoo may have been in reality a multiplicity of ethnic- or locally-based cults that expressed divergent rather than common identities and only later became integrated." Obeah in Barbados may have developed in a broadly comparable fashion. What whites included under the rubric Obeah in the earlier slave period, around the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth, was probably composed of different, albeit broadly related, beliefs and practices deriving from several West African ethnic traditions.<sup>52</sup> Over the years, as fewer Africans were transported to Barbados and as an Afro-creole culture developed on the island, what was called Obeah evolved into a loosely defined complex involving supernatural practices related to healing and protection and centered on the role of the Obeah practitioner.

Although whites in Barbados were commonly using the term Obeah by the early eighteenth century, or earlier<sup>53</sup> – which is of an undetermined African linguistic derivation, see appendix – the term may not have been widely used by Barbadian slaves during this period when many were African-born and from different ethno-linguistic groups. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, when the great majority of slaves were creoles, the term Obeah was employed by persons of all racial groups, although whites and blacks tended to place different emphasis on its meaning and functions.

However Obeah was conceived or defined by different racial groups in Barbados, there is no doubt of its association with medicinal practices. In general, there is every indication that European medicine was not more efficacious in treating common ailments than the slaves' self-help practices, or even the body's own natural defenses. Even in the best of circumstances the medical care that Barbadian slaves (and whites) received from European medical practitioners (creole or foreign) was singularly deficient when judged by modern standards. From the mid-1600s through the early 1800s the "therapeutic efficacy" of medicine in Britain, of which white medicine in Barbados was essentially an extension, "remained hopelessly hit-and-miss ... the doctor was inevitably tarred with failure and identified as the accomplice of disease and death" (Porter & Porter 1989:27, 64, 74-75). Even with improvements in plantation health care during the nineteenth century (e.g., smallpox vaccination), it is doubtful that in and of itself

52. Barbadian slaves, reported Hughes (1750:15) in the 1730s and 1740s, "are very tenaciously addicted to the rites, ceremonies, and superstitions of their own countries."

53. BL, Sloane Manuscripts 2302, Letters from Thomas Walduck to James Petiver, November 1710-September 1712; Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Archives, London, Letter Books, Series B, vol. 6, 62, Letter from Arthur Holt to Henry Newman, February 18, 1729; Hughes 1750:15-16.

European medicine had a major impact on the health and longevity of the slave population. "In truth," Kenneth Kiple (1984:154) writes, "the slaves would probably have been better off with their own practitioners, for white medicine in the West Indies was, to put it charitably, of low quality" (cf. Higman 1984: 261; Sheridan 1985:333-36). Since European medicine often failed to successfully treat a variety of ailments and did not necessarily show itself as a superior system, the continuing dependency on Obeah people, Negro doctors, or other types of healers who did not claim supernatural powers was supported by social as well as medical reasons, and slaves did, indeed, rely on "their own practitioners." These "practitioners" played fundamental roles in slave medicine and self-help throughout the era of slavery, and they played important roles in the direction taken by Barbados' folk-healing tradition in the postemancipation period.

#### APPENDIX

#### ON THE EARLY USE OF THE TERM OBEAH IN BARBADOS AND THE ANGLOPHONE CARIBBEAN

Although it remains an open question where and when the term Obeah (as differentiated from the variety of beliefs and practices associated with it) was first used in the Caribbean (the earliest recorded usage occurs in Barbados), scholars agree that the term itself ultimately derives from some African language or languages. Cassidy and LePage (1967:326) tentatively note that Obeah probably derives from multiple sources, and give words, with malevolent meanings, in Efik and Twi as possible sources. A Twi (Gold Coast) origin, with its implication of witchcraft/sorcery is more commonly given (e.g., Patterson 1967:185-86; cf. Field 1961:137), and this etymology, with its negative implication, is often accepted, albeit uncritically, by scholars who rely on secondary sources in the British Caribbean literature for their information. Yet, as Richard Allsopp (1996:412) has recently observed "no precise origin [for the term] has been determined, but some items esp[ecially] in W[est] Afr[ican] lang[uages] suggest a connection." Deriving his information from English dictionaries of several African languages/language groups, he gives words in Twi, Efik, Igbo, and Ibibio that refer in one form or another to evil magic or sorcery/witchcraft although the term means "practitioner, herbalist" in Ibibio.

With the exception of the Ibibio word, every discussion of Obeah's etymology traces it to a root with socially negative or malevolent meanings. Bilby (1993: 24-26) offers a very different perspective in his sophisticated and critical discussion of the etymology of the term and the variety of meanings attributed to it. Although agreeing that the term derives from an African language, Bilby rejects most conventional interpretations and

makes a solid case that there is simply insufficient historical or linguistic evidence for assigning a meaning in which "we can have reasonable confidence." More significantly, he argues that the meanings often attributed to Obeah derive from assumptions in the written sources that it is "essentially malevolent witchcraft; [thus] it is not surprising that etymologists looking for parallel words in African languages have focused their search on terms that are usually translated into English as 'witchcraft,' 'sorcery,' and the like." But, Bilby asks, "what if the search had started from a different initial assumption?" Since etymologists have started with the assumption "that Obeah denotes evil sorcery," they "have predictably succeeded in finding words in a number of African languages that are phonologically somewhat similar to Obeah and have meanings related to witchcraft or sorcery." However, he suggests that if etymologists were to view Obeah "to begin with as a kind of neutral or positive spiritual force," then etymological discussions might go in another direction and find the roots of Obeah in other linguistic contexts and languages.

An example of an African linguistic context in which the term Obeah or some cognate form has positive or morally neutral meanings derives from evidence from Igbo and related languages of the Niger delta region. As noted above, the term Obeah can mean "practitioner, herbalist" in Ibibio (Allsopp 1996:412), or, it could be, as Harry Johnston (1910:253) suggested "a variant or a corruption of an Efik or Ibo word from the northeast or east of the Niger delta, which simply means 'Doctor'" (see also Chambers 1997:88-90 for a discussion of the role of the *ndi obea* or *dibia* among the precolonial Igbo).

I suggest that English-speakers in the British Caribbean adopted the term from some African language (Igbo or Igbo-related?) without being aware of its full meaning in that language group. The adopted term referred, or was related, to some occult role or practices which, although not fully understood by Europeans, were not of European origin. Europeans (i.e., native English speakers) continued to use this term to refer to an increasingly wide range of supernatural-related practices followed by the enslaved (regardless of their ethno-linguistic origin) but which derived from several West African cultural traditions. Later, the term was adopted in the Caribbean by other enslaved persons from other African-language groups or of creole birth. The term diffused throughout the British Caribbean and came to be employed more widely by whites as well as by the enslaved themselves; however, the latter, as argued in the main body of this paper, viewed the practices associated with Obeah in much more socially beneficial terms than the former.<sup>54</sup>

54. The argument presented in this appendix is greatly elaborated in a paper co-authored with Kenneth Bilby that will be published in *Slavery & Abolition* in 2001.

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## THE SWEET TRADE REVIVED

*Women Pirates and the Politics of the Jolly Roger.* ULRIKE KLAUSMANN, MARION MEINZERIN & GABRIEL KUHN. New York: Black Rose Books, 1997. x + 280 pp. (Paper US\$ 23.99)

*Pirates! Brigands, Buccaneers, and Privateers in Fact, Fiction, and Legend.* JAN ROGOZINSKI. New York: Da Capo Press, 1996. xvi + 398 pp. (Paper US\$ 19.95)

*Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate.* HARRY KELSEY. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, xviii + 566 pp. (Cloth US\$ 35.00)

*A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates.* CAPT. CHARLES JOHNSON (edited and with introduction by DAVID CORDINGLY). New York: Lyons Press. 1998 [Orig. 1724]. xiv + 370 pp. (Cloth US\$ 29.95)

The subject of piracy lends itself to giddy jokes about parrots and wooden legs, but also talk of politics, law, cultural relativism, and of course Hollywood. This selection of new books on piracy in the Caribbean and beyond touches on all these possibilities and more. They include a biography of the ever-controversial Elizabethan corsair, Francis Drake; an encyclopedia of piracy in history, literature, and film; a reissued classic eighteenth-century pirate prosopography; and an anarchist-feminist political tract inspired by history and legend. If nothing else, this pot-pourri of approaches to piracy should serve as a reminder that the field of pirate studies is not only alive and well, but gaining new ground.

Harry Kelsey's *Sir Francis Drake* is perhaps the first full-length biography of this famous Elizabethan raider to treat him as an unequivocal rogue from start to finish. In less able hands, such an approach might have degenerated to needless defamation or at least cranky debunking, but this biogra-

pher finds Drake the more fascinating for his numerous apparent character flaws and explores each to maximum explanatory potential. Kelsey's Drake was unremarkable as a patriot or even naval tactician, but he was nevertheless fearless and cunning in certain circumstances. As one would expect from a pirate, Francis Drake seems to have been innately impetuous and opportunistic, and his fortunes resemble those of a compulsive gambler. The author highlights numerous incidents in which Drake seems to have acted in order to save himself rather than risk life or limb for Queen and companions; that such incidents span his career from San Juan de Ulúa (Mexico) in 1568 to the bungled Lisbon raid of 1589 lends weight to Kelsey's generally unflattering conclusions. With crewmembers Drake could be an overbearing bully, quick to imagine conspiracies and on more than one occasion willing to have underlings executed for supposed mutiny when safely out of reach of English courts. Such was his reputation for harsh and even dishonest treatment of crews that he had trouble finding recruits in the 1580s and 1590s, when his reputation abroad was well established.

The story of Francis Drake as bombastic bully might not compel save for the extraordinary trajectory of the pirate's life. Even in the most pedestrian treatment, Drake's exploits seem so inherently dramatic as to border on the fantastic. Kelsey's narrative is written in an earnest, workmanlike style, only occasionally prolix and repetitious, but doggedly critical throughout of a subject whose reputation has been burnished to a high glow. Many have tried to seize upon a piece of Drake's legacy, and Kelsey questions the legitimacy of several such attempts. He examines the famous pirate's claims to "New Albion," a mysterious site apparently located along the California coast touched on during Drake's 1577-80 circumnavigation of the globe, for example, carefully pointing out inconsistencies in the evidence and offering alternative interpretations. The author's knowledge of Spanish and thorough use of Spanish sources is evident here, as in his discussion of Drake's inflated reputation, particularly in the Spanish-Portuguese imperial realm.

As Kelsey notes, Philip II was himself less than terrified of Drake; the Spanish king was not much concerned by small numbers of pirates in the Indies, but greater English naval designs in Europe greatly interested him, particularly in the later 1580s. Even Drake's navigational expertise is doubted, since he often traveled with Portuguese and Spanish pilots and just as often relied on stolen charts, or *derroteros*, to find his way. That Drake was a pirate rather than a privateer (i.e. a corsair operating with explicit royal sanction) most of his life is stressed throughout, at times relying more on character judgment than legal perspective. Drake's participation in the African slave trade, on the other hand, is rightly contextualized; Kelsey reminds the reader that in Elizabeth's day slaving was an obscure, but hardly noble profession for an Englishman. An incident of sexual abuse of a female African slave in

the Pacific is likewise treated in a straightforward manner, further evidence of Drake's selective approach to morality (noted by his English contemporaries). Along the same lines, Kelsey points out the inconsistencies in Drake's approach to religious crusading. It seems clear from the evidence presented that the pirate's devotion to Protestantism was strongest when it justified acts of pillage, or served to aid in gathering information. For the most part, Drake seems to have preferred pretext to preaching.

In sum, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate* offers an alternative, "warts-and-all" view of this nearly ubiquitous Elizabethan sea-dog, a fine companion to John Sugden's somewhat more traditional but equally compelling *Sir Francis Drake* (1990). The author's reliance on primary sources and careful sorting of fact and legend lend great credibility to the arguments, and also provide new details on some voyages. Illustrations are well chosen and finely reproduced, and the numerous maps tracing individual voyages are extremely helpful. Though at times heavy-handed with regard to issues of personal character, Kelsey's methodical treatment of many incidents involving plunder in the sixteenth-century Caribbean are a valuable addition to the region's historiography.

If one doubts the staying power of the Drake legend, particularly in the twentieth century, one might consult Jan Rogozinski's *Pirates! An A-Z Encyclopedia*. This richly illustrated encyclopedia of piracy in world history and culture will certainly come in handy for students, teachers, historians, and, perhaps especially, screenwriters. Similar, and certainly complementary to David F. Marley's fine reference dictionary, *Pirates and Privateers of the Americas* (1994), Rogozinski's *Pirates!* provides brief entries discussing everything from the film *Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kidd* to "Zenocetes," arch-pirate of ancient Cilicia. Rogozinski brings a truly encyclopedic knowledge of history, literature, and film to this volume, and his background in French history is evident in the excellent entries for the Barbary Coast corsairs (the seemingly innumerable *reis* of Algiers, Tripoli, and neighboring ports), and also the French Caribbean, particularly via the works of DuTertre, Charlevoix, and Labat.

Entries related to Spanish and Dutch enterprises are also valuable and nearly exhaustive, as are numerous English slang terms that tend to be misapplied or anachronistic. "Walking the plank," for example, was apparently a fancy of nineteenth-century fiction writers, not an historically-documented pirate practice. Though the rather extensive discussion of the term "admiral" traces Arabic and Spanish roots, a second usage, meaning "flagship," or in the Spanish, "second-in-command" (*almiranta*), something often discussed by buccaneers as evidenced by their journals, is not mentioned. But this is a minor quibble considering the breadth of coverage offered. Also, though statements such as "Caribbean pirates treated black sailors with color-blind pragmatism" (p. 28) are no doubt exaggerations,

they do fit into the revisionist tradition that since the 1980s has painted the buccaneers as rowdy democrats willing to jettison prevailing notions of race and class. In general, Rogozinski is careful to highlight African and Afro-American participation in both pirate raids and defensive actions against them, an admirable shift from an older historiography that largely ignored agency or even involvement of people of color. Though occasionally pedantic with regard to such things as the use of earrings and the practice of tattooing, *Pirates!* is a most useful addition to the growing body of pirate-related reference sources.

Another topic of debate since the late 1980s dismissed or ignored by Rogozinski is the authorship of *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, first published in London in 1724. Long attributed to the inevitable Daniel Defoe, this classic has been handsomely (and economically) reproduced by the Lyons Press, accompanied by a compact but informative introduction by the renowned pirate scholar, David Cordingly. Cordingly not only brings the reader up to date on scholarship regarding Captain Charles Johnson (not Defoe, it is claimed, but rather an experienced sea captain and possible ex-pirate), but also provides useful annotation, a glossary, and a select bibliography. The biographical vignettes that make up the bulk of Johnson's book are as fascinating to read today as they must have been in Robert Walpole's England, and they are no doubt what motivated the new edition. Like moral fables, the stories trace an arc for each pirate from origins, to rise, to usually disastrous fall. Thus we follow the bizarre trajectories of, to name a few, John Avery, Edward Teach (a.k.a. Blackbeard), Charles Vane, Bartholomew Roberts, William Kidd, and the best-known of all women pirates, Ann Bonny and Mary Read.

Aside from A.O. Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America* (first published in 1674), no other single source on the history of piracy has been so influential, or so misused. For example, although historians have proved much of Johnson's material to be historically credible, his work has been so widely read and greatly relied upon that the greater dimensions of piracy as a phenomenon in the early modern Americas have become skewed in favor of these particular Anglo-American rogues and their misdeeds. Influential writers working with mostly English sources, such as David Cordingly (1997) and Marcus Rediker (1987), have tended to follow rather than challenge this long-standing trend. Though certainly no fault of Johnson's, this tendency in the scholarship could stand further correction. Such has been the project of historians working in the wake of the Hispanist Clarence Haring, among them Kenneth Andrews, Peter Bradley, Peter Earle, Peter Gerhard, Cornelis Goslinga, Paul Hoffman, Manuel Lucena Salmoral, David Marley, Carla Rahn Phillips, and others. As more French, Dutch, Spanish, and other sources come to light, the larger picture of early modern

piracy will no doubt become clearer than the one suggested by Johnson's vivid *General History*.

Another relatively long-standing issue of debate in the history of piracy has been the role of women, either as pirates or as accessories of one sort or another. Such women appear throughout Rogozinski's encyclopedia, particularly in references to Hollywood, but in *Women Pirates and the Politics of the Jolly Roger* German free-lance writers Ulrike Klausmann, Marion Meinzerin, and Gabriel Kuhn turn the spotlight directly on women pirates. They offer up a mix of fact, legend, savory recipes, and political dicta regarding women and piracy throughout world history by region, from east to west.

To begin with East Asia is a wise choice, in fact, since this is the only region in the world where more than a few women engaged in piracy first-hand, at least according to surviving records. First treated is a legendary woman pirate of Chinese antiquity, Ch'iao K'uo Fü Jên, followed by the early nineteenth-century Lady Ch'ing. This chapter should be compared to Diane Murray's fine article in Jo Stanley's *Bold in her Breeches: Women Pirates across the Ages* (1995:203-39). Murray's examination of the fascinating life of this former Cantonese prostitute, also known as Cheng I Sao, would offer interested readers added depth and historicity. There is a break in the swashbuckling in Klausmann *et al.*, to discuss food (each regional section contains an interruption "from the galley"), in this case shark-fin soup. The remainder of the Asia section drifts from vague discussion of gender roles in China to the Opium Wars of the early nineteenth century, followed by a brief treatment of South China Sea piracy in the early twentieth century. This section strongly suggests, but does not prove, that this activity was dominated by women. A case treated in some detail is that of Lai Sho Sz'en, a Chinese woman who engaged in acts of piracy and privateering against the Japanese during the turbulent 1930s. The final entry for Asia regards an account of shadowy women pirates in the 1990s Philippines.

From East Asia *Women Pirates* moves to the Mediterranean and a discussion of legendary figures active in ancient Greece and Asia Minor (also discussed by Jo Stanley, above), among them Elissa, Artemisia, and the third-century-BCE Illyrian queen, Teuta. After a recipe for grilled eels, attention is turned to the somewhat better-documented sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here in the midst of the North African struggle against Christian Europe one finds an exiled Andalusian *morisca* named Sida, who became a corsair leader at the Moroccan port of Tetuan in the age of the Barbarossa brothers of Algiers (ca. 1500-46). Women could also be victims in this business, and the final Mediterranean tale, that of the Marquess de Fresne, is not about a woman pirate but rather a woman taken captive by a Barbary renegade.

In the Atlantic, Viking women such as the legendary Alvilda (or Alfild) led the way in pillaging unwary neighbors for a time. The Vikings were a hard act to follow, but the authors manage to revive little-known stories of late medieval women pirates in France and Germany, follow them with a recipe for North Sea-style cod stew, and finish with the dramatic life and exploits of sixteenth-century Irish pirate leader Grace O'Malley. The next section, treating the Caribbean, discusses a range of cases, from a supposed female buccaneer on Tortuga named Jacquette Delahaye to the better-known stories of Ann Bonny and Mary Read, central figures in Johnson's *General History of the Pirates*. After an interlude of St. Domingue-style roast pork, à la Père Labat, the discussion turns to Anne Dieu-le-veut, the pistol-wielding wife of Dutch buccaneer Laurens de Graaf. The most provocative chapter in the book asks whether the famous early eighteenth-century pirate Bartholomew Roberts was in fact a woman. This may not be an impossibility, but the evidence presented does not go far beyond describing "thigh muscles like Martina Navratilova" (p. 179) and a seemingly un-pirate-like attention to tidiness and temperance. This piquant excursion — one of several in this generally breezy collection — is thoughtfully followed by a recipe for "Piquant Shark Schnitzel."

*Women Pirates* steers away from epicurean delights in a political essay by Gabriel Kuhn that attempts to link pirates from the so-called "golden age of piracy" (ca. 1690-1720) to more recently articulated doctrines of anarchism. This is not the first time such a connection has been made, but Kuhn's effort is notable for cleaving to a very rigid definition of the word "pirate"; in essence, the term is pruned of its uglier pecuniary, or "accumulative," branches to render the true pirate a natural anarchist. Fundamental aversion to private property was rarely proclaimed by early modern sea predators, and some of the most famous, such as Francis Drake, Piet Heyn, and Henry Morgan, were avid seekers of wealth as a means to landed gentility. Even among lesser figures, such as the survivors of a South Sea raid captured in Tidewater Virginia in 1688, parting with "baggs of Spanish money" was only done with much grief and years of lawsuits. Pirates throughout history have flouted the laws and mores of land and sea, and some have found innovative ways to redistribute wealth. Still, as these provocative new titles on piracy in history and legend remind us, from a distance it can be difficult to distinguish sharks from dolphins.

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## HAVE WE PASSED THE LAST POST- ? THEORIZING POST/COLONIAL LITERATURE

*Aimé Césaire*. GREGSON DAVIS. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. xvi + 208 pp. (Cloth US\$ 59.95)

*Caribbean Poetics: Toward an Aesthetic of West Indian Literature*. SILVIO TORRES-SAILLANT. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. xiv + 353 pp. (Cloth £45.00)

*Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature*. CHRIS BONGIE. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998. xi + 543 pp. (Cloth US\$ 65.00, Paper US\$ 24.95)

The three books under review here all make important claims for a Caribbean poetics, but they do so from perspectives that range from practical criticism (Davis), through comparative poetics (Torres-Saillant), to what is sometimes called high theory (Bongie). With the exception of Davis's book, which is a detailed treatment of a single seminal figure, they range widely and seek grounds for broad comparative assessments. The need to establish such grounds for comparison is witnessed by the three-volume *History of Literature in the Caribbean*, which Bongie and Torres-Saillant both reference. To find one's way in this potentially dizzying display of critical and theoretical acumen, it will be most helpful to proceed from the general to the particular, from high theory to practical criticism.

Post-modern, Post-colonial (or is it Postcolonial?), Counter-Postmodern ... How does one cope? The prefixes keep tumbling out of the word processors of the theoreticians, each of whom seems quite determined to ring changes on the usage of all predecessors. The non-specialist is at a loss to know where to begin; but begin one must, since without an adequate lexicon the risk of confusion in this area is well-nigh total.

Since Kwame Anthony Appiah asked the rhetorical question whether the Post- in Post-Modern is the Post- in Post-Colonial at the beginning of

the 1990s, the distinctions have proliferated. One cannot deny that it was necessary to draw attention to this epistemological problem, as Appiah did, but we now run the risk of originality overwhelming comprehensibility. Chris Bongie's *Islands and Exiles* proposes to bring order out of terminological confusion:

The "post/colonial," in short, will be distinguished throughout this book from other variants of the word, notably "postcolonial" and, more infrequently, "post-colonial." Postcolonial will be used simply as an historical marker, covering approximately the last half of this century and describing certain societies that have been or still are under the formal or informal control of another nation, as well as the cultural artifacts that these societies have produced; post-colonial will henceforth be limited to conveying the (purely ideological) hypothesis of a future that would be completely severed from colonialism – a fully liberated time that the "post/colonial" insistently puts into question. (p. 13)

Fair enough; the distinctions are reasonably clear and allow for relative precision in usage. The next paragraph in Bongie's theoretical introduction lays out the lineage of his position with respect to what has come to be called French Theory, of whom the leading exponents for him are Lyotard and Derrida. "The entangled condition that I am gesturing toward in the word 'post/colonial' can be read in parallel with Lyotard's more recent uses of the word 'postmodern,' in which it signals not a 'new age' following upon modernity ... but a self-reflexive component of that modernity" (p. 13). This distinction resembles that which Theo D'haen has posited between modernism and counter-modernism (a colonial phenomenon) and postmodernism and counter-postmodernism (in the postcolonial era). Like Bongie, D'haen begins with Lyotard, but D'haen then develops Habermas's critique of Lyotard's dismissal of metanarratives. (See D'haen 1997:303-21.)

Keenly aware of the charges of political "quietism" leveled against deconstruction, Bongie expatiates in his analysis of Coetzee's *Foe* on the novel's relation to Derrida:

*Foe*'s incessant return to the sign of its own blindness, its parasitic attachment to the already-told stories that it recites, revising without in any decisive way overturning them, is eminently deconstructionist in its epistemological concerns and its insistence on the necessity of inhabiting the very thing that it puts into question (be it, as here, the language of colonialism, or, in Derrida's case, that of metaphysics. (p. 26)

The length and the syntactic complexity of this sentence are typical of the author's style, which is part and parcel of his highly self-conscious engagement with theory.

Readers of the *New West Indian Guide* may well find the most useful aspect of Bongie's book in his application of Édouard Glissant's theory of creolization to a wide range of literary and historical phenomena from the late eighteenth century to the Martiniquan Creolists of the present day. He also uses the critical writing of J. Michael Dash to excellent advantage. Bongie's pairing of Glissant with Lafcadio Hearn in his Chapter 4 produces critical perspectives that are as stimulating as they are unexpected.

To bring Bongie into useful dialogue with both Davis and Torres-Saillant, one cannot do better than to focus on their respective treatments of Aimé Césaire, whose work figures in all three books. Bongie's focus on discourse leads him to disseminate his references to Césaire throughout much of his book: in the chapter on Glissant, of course (Glissant early on pointed out the necessity of transcending *négritude*); and also in a chapter on the Martiniquan Creolists of today (who began by declaring themselves the sons of Césaire only to attempt to kill the father, in the case of Raphaël Confiant); but, most importantly, in a chapter he devotes to the Guadeloupean novelist Daniel Maximin, whose work is well suited to Bongie's theoretical approach. Bongie concludes a discussion of Césaire's writings on Toussaint Louverture and Victor Schoelcher with this illuminating observation on his relationship to Maximin:

It is Césaire's problematically faithful imitation of his "revolutionary" models that I will be discussing at the beginning of the next chapter – a chapter in which, through a consideration of Daniel Maximin's post-modern reworkings of Caribbean modernism ... I will be interrogating the explosive rhetoric of transcendence (*dépassement*), linearity (*lignée*), and ends and/or goals (*fin*) with which Césaire justifies the emulation of his nineteenth-century model. (p. 340)

Whatever position the reader may take on deconstructionist political quietism, the manner in which Bongie uses rewriting (in Maximin) to connect the late eighteenth century with the late twentieth is productive and illuminating.

Silvio Torres-Saillant positions himself from the outset in opposition to Bongie's theoretical perspective:

The intellectual discourse of such prominent contemporary figures as Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Paul de Man, and Jürgen Habermas has little to say regarding the literary art of the Caribbean. These are Western intellectuals whose theories have derived from their reflection on Western problems, and it is difficult to assign to them universal applicability. By the same token, a discourse that sets out to explain Caribbean literature must bear in mind the sociocultural specificity and the historical imperatives governing its development. (p. 7)

Nothing could be clearer, in theory at least. In Chapters 1 and 2 Torres-Saillant treats “the unity of the Caribbean on sociohistorical and cultural grounds” and “[the hypothesis that] the region constitutes a coherent cultural whole,” respectively (p. 10). For this author, the foremost literary intellectual whose work points the way toward a comparative Caribbean poetics is (Edward) Kamau Brathwaite, to whom the third chapter is devoted. Successive chapters treat the work of the Haitian René Depestre and the Dominican Pedro Mir. The sixth and concluding chapter “highlights the points of contact between the three writers studied” (p. 11). The creolization that constitutes the subtext of Bongie’s book becomes, for Torres-Saillant, “a notable hybridization of form and a handling of language that oscillates between the loftiness of high-sounding oratory and the demotic style of pedestrian talk” (p. 11). Torres-Saillant’s style is as accessible as Bongie’s is intricate; the former writes as a native intellectual (who happens to chair a Dominican Studies program in the City University of New York), the latter as a Canadian metatheoretician working in a Department of English in the United States.

Treatment of Césaire as an unavoidable reference point and major figure is as disseminated throughout Torres-Saillant’s study as it is in Bongie’s. From that point on, however, the contrasts stand out starkly. In the chapter on Depestre, Césaire’s *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* underpins the binomial oppositions proceeding from black/white that Torres-Saillant foregrounds in the collection *Gerbe de sang*. Later in the same chapter Césaire’s *Lettre à Maurice Thorez* – his public statement of opposition on quitting the French Communist Party in 1956 – is used to similar effect. In the chapter on Pedro Mir, Césaire is again cited (following Roberto Márquez’s *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry* ..., 1974 [pp. 208-9]) as Mir is called “a Caribbean poet in the militant troubadour tradition of Guillén, Césaire, or Jacques Roumain” (p. 215). In the chapter on Brathwaite, Césaire’s play *Une Tempête* is drawn into ideological consonance with the Barbadian poet’s “Caliban,” also published in 1969, a tactic that Torres-Saillant practices consistently to demonstrate the thematic and cultural unity of the region’s major writers. It is abundantly clear that in this study the tradition of politically committed writing – which Bongie’s theoretical perspective subverts and problematizes at every turn – is alive and well.

Davis’s *Aimé Césaire* is at home in the paradigm of Césaire-as-modernist that the present reviewer largely created twenty years ago. No worries over the postmodern or the postcolonial trouble Davis’s limpid critical style. Even Césaire’s late collection of poetry, *moi, laminaire* ..., (1982), remains outside the debates over postcolonial/postmodern theory, despite its having been treated as a postmodern work in 1990.

These minor caveats aside, the book is brilliant. Trained as a classical scholar, Davis brings to his subject the necessary knowledge of Greek and

Latin (and their literatures) that previous critics of Césaire have lacked. He builds upon the best previous work and cites his sources just enough to let the reader know where to look for more extensive treatments. Indeed, readers who care about Césaire's work have a right to be disappointed only by the book's brevity; but that is not the author's fault. The Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature, for which it was commissioned, is a series of slim volumes (a scant two hundred printed pages) that does not allow for a thorough discussion of Césaire's poetic oeuvre, much less his works for the theater.

Davis's book has six chapters of more or less equal length; after prolegomena on Césaire's education and early influences, the author turns successively to "Exploring Racial Selves" (on the *Cahier*), "Inventing a Lyric Voice" (on *Armes miraculeuses*), "Lyric Registers" (on *Soleil cou coupé* and *Cadastre*), "The Turn to Poetic Drama," and finally "The Return to Lyric" (on *moi, laminaire* ...). A brief epilogue and even briefer introduction frame this slim but elegant volume.

Davis is at his best when he does a condensed exegesis of selected poems from each of the collections he takes up. The result is invariably as clear as it is learned, and the reader comes away with a firm sense of Césaire's poetics. In the forty-page chapter devoted to *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, for instance, the opening gambit runs thus:

A reader who is attuned to the Western literary canon may readily detect intertextual resonances in the idea of a deferred homecoming (*retour au pays natal*). The archetypal return in the Western tradition is, of course, that of the Homeric Odysseus, and far from downplaying the potential significance of the parallel, we would do well to pose, albeit briefly, the question of how *Cahier* subtly exploits the association. (p. 22)

How indeed? This is the crucial question for those more attuned to theoretical problems than is Davis. His answer, which involves taking seriously the "masking" rituals Césaire evokes in his long poem, touches on cultural anthropology as well as comparative literature, the author's academic discipline: "Each of the principal masks (and there are principal as well as subsidiary ones in the course of the poem's evolution) endows the wearer with a distinctive voice. What is chiefly conferred in this instance is a mysterious power of potent speech (note the fivefold anaphora, 'I would say')" (p. 29). Derek Walcott, who is not mentioned here, did his own Caribbean appropriation of Homer, twice in fact, first in an epic poem (*Omeros*), then in a play (*The Odyssey*). Walcott's work, like Césaire's, would qualify as counter-modernism in Theo D'haen's terminology.

Several readings of the *Cahier*, since this reviewer's in 1981, have seen a downward spiral that prefigures a kind of spiritual rebirth of the

hero/speaker. Davis treats that feature of the long poem as follows: "The narrative setting has explicit eschatological color that points the reader to the threshold of death. Before making his foray into the world of the dead, the hero of *Cahier* must first shed, like his ancient Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman archetypes, his pretensions to *grandeur*" (p. 44). Davis then explicates the all-too-famous passages in the *Cahier* where the speaker refers to what "we" colonized Caribbean peoples have not been – "Amazons of the king of Dahomey, nor princes of Ghana ... nor scholars at Timbuctu ... nor architects of Djenné, nor Mahdis, nor warriors" (p. 44) – which have always proved a stumbling block to those critics for whom Césaire's poem must be an unambiguous statement of neo-African resistance to colonialism. The result is a much more sophisticated and convincing demonstration of the dialectics of ethnicity in the *Cahier* than we have been accustomed to.

Concerning the lyric oratorio *Et les chiens se taisaient*, which Césaire had designated a tragedy, Davis has taken up (p. 131) the notion put forward by Arnold (1990) to the effect that "the ancient Egyptian variant of the 'dying god' motif ... is arguably the preponderant model in Césaire's eclectic mythography." He works out this hypothesis in much more detail than was previously attempted, so well, in fact, that the case has now been made conclusively.

To those like Torres-Saillant who wish to maintain the autochthonous quality of recent Caribbean masters, Davis would reply that "Egyptian civilization was regarded by the *négritude* writers as 'black'" (p. 131) long before Bernal or even Cheikh Anta Diop popularized the notion. Such justification is unnecessary, however, if one pursues the theoretical perspective of counter-modernism, according to which colonized intellectuals appropriated models and styles already present in the contemporary West and then turned them back on their colonial masters. This is precisely the sense Davis gives to the term *post-surrealism* (p. 74 *et passim*), the only instance one finds of a period term prefixed by *post-* in this book.

Each of the three books has an excellent bibliography and a very useful index.

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## ECUMEN(ICAL) TEXTS: CARIBBEAN NATION-STATES AND THE GLOBAL ECUMENE

*The Haunting Past: Politics, Economics and Race in Caribbean Life.* ALVIN O. THOMPSON. Kingston: Ian Randle, 1997. xvi + 283 pp. (Cloth US\$ 70.95, Paper US\$ 27.95)

*Nationalism and Identity: Culture and the Imagination in a Caribbean Diaspora.* STEFANO HARNEY. Kingston: University of the West Indies; London: Zed Books, 1996. 216 pp. (Paper J\$ 350.00, US\$ 10.00, £6.00)

*Recharting the Caribbean: Land, Law, and Citizenship in the British Virgin Islands.* BILL MAURER. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997. xvii + 301 pp. (Cloth US\$ 44.50)

Building on views espoused by the American Enterprise Institute, columnist George Will solves the dilemma of unequal development among contemporary nation-states in one fell swoop: Western Europe and North America outstripped Latin America and its environs, among other places, for one reason – culture.

Much meaning must be unpacked from that word, but the conclusion is: The spread of democracy, free markets, technology, and information is not enough to rescue ... nations, from the consequences of their cultural deficits. Such deficits, although not incurable, are intractable. (Will 1999:64)

Another “lesson to be drawn,” he says, is that “Government cannot revise culture, wholesale, but government has – it cannot help but have – cultural consequences” (Will 1999:64). Even as we embark on the twenty-first century, we cling to hoary, Age of Imperialism presumptions about the character and role of culture – signaled implicitly with a capital C. Such presumptions fuel statements like the above; governments convey material and

moral improvements but these do not take hold in culturally inadequate environments.

Alvin Thompson, Stefano Harney, and Bill Maurer are concerned with unequal development in contemporary Caribbean nation-states, and, one might say, the relationship between culture and government, though from premises antithetical to Will's. They show that "government" – as state and nation – indeed has cultural consequences for what it administers, though not in terms of rehabilitation. Rather than viewing governing apparatuses as potentially rescuing people from themselves, these authors approach such apparatuses as the means of promoting ideologies and practices that, in local cultural realities, often do not foster positive environments of autonomy, equity, or creativity.

Thompson offers a political science-inflected history of colonialism and its aftermath in the Caribbean region; Harney trains his lens of literary criticism on Trinidadian authors; Maurer is an anthropologist looking at law and statecraft in the British Virgin Islands. Each, then, has a distinct understanding of "culture" and "nation," but each in his own fashion inquires into the nature of colonial and post-independence Caribbean states, the ideologies of community that sustain them, and the relationship between these creations called nation-states and the populations they claim – at home and abroad. Alluding to the problem of positionality – material, ideological, and cultural place in the world – the books explore alternative ways of understanding the Caribbean region. One is to re-situate the Caribbean within intellectual paradigms that can propel it into a central position out of the margins. Another is to rethink the role of "democracy, free markets, technology, and information" (Will 1999:64) in shaping Caribbean culture and identity and the way these are meaningful to those who share and contest it.

Writing as an insider, and writing, Thompson says, for Caribbean readers, the tone of *The Haunting Past* is didactic, an introductory survey that might be based on a series of university lectures. Covering an expansive terrain – Amerindians to Bob Marley; Bahamas to Brazil; British, Spanish, French, Dutch possessions – Thompson sees the central issue in Caribbean life lying in a conundrum: its troubled past, exposing ever more "haunting revelations" with each new disclosure (p. xiv), must be faced; the ghosts of history that continue to possess the region nonetheless require confrontation and exorcising. These ghosts comprise the "unholy trinity" (p. xv) of politics, economics, and race which channel, if you will, the subjugation of the region's populations. Thompson's claim is that contemporary underdevelopment in Less Developed Countries is fostered by "external forces," read colonialism, whose foundations are entrenched and thereby keep "our past ... very much alive" (pp. 25-26). This living past reflects the nexus of colonialism and the problem of history in the Caribbean: Europe's civilizing mission justified its exploitative agenda, and the shame of the colonized at their

alleged lack of heritage increases their vulnerability. The denial of history – in terms of both the ability to claim one's own and acknowledging unwilling participation in another's – has had, Thompson posits, a profound influence on culture, psyche, and perception of self among Caribbean peoples.

This most promising premise frames the chapters of the book, which are grouped into three sections: "Politics," "Economics," and "Race." The "haunting past" as an organizing principle is most persuasive as a means of illustrating the structural connections between past and present; less effective is its use in highlighting the symbolic connections of this legacy. For example, the systematic pollution of the region by developed countries is more forcefully critiqued in terms of the unfettered activities of foreign firms and World Bank policies than by means of metaphors like the attitude of "a former era" when "human waste" was dumped in the Caribbean by "power-brokers in Europe" (p. 163). Thus, although the mechanisms of haunting are well illustrated in some chapters, others rely as much on asserting the tenacity of Euro-colonizer world-views. Beliefs and values certainly shape policy and practice but Thompson is not always specific as to how this might work.

In this way, however, Thompson usefully raises key problematics in understanding the region. One concerns the Caribbean as locus of creativity or degradation. Thompson is not alone in grappling with how we might celebrate creative resilience while emphasizing oppression, though reliance on V.S. Naipaul's (1974) caustic pessimism must spur his conviction that the legacy of disunity and dependency in Caribbean societies dulls its "spirit of creativity and inventiveness" (p. 27). Another issue is how the past shapes consciousness and discourse – does creating a "more positive future" require "first and foremost" developing a "new sense of pride," which entails "a kind of revolutionary consciousness" (p. 246)? Does change lie ultimately in mentality and perception? Finally, if so, from where will alternative visions emerge?

The first section, "Politics," contains two chapters that overview the formation and deformation of political structures in the region, and the forms of violence on which colonialism has been predicated. Particularly useful is the summary of U.S. imperialism in the region. Some insights are made cursorily, however. For example, the apparent paradox that U.S. efforts to promote democracy in the Caribbean has at times strengthened despotic traditions there (p. 88) is an important point, raised yet not developed. Elaborating it would have been an opportunity for detailed cross examination of democracy's dark side; not pursuing it renders the argument more polemic than analytical.

Whether "true" democracy is actually possible is arguable; more to the point is how Thompson sees Caribbean societies striving toward it, given the contemporary global system within which they are exploited, and the ghosts of history that maintain them thus. One of the burdens of the colo-

nial era in the Caribbean is its fragmentation, being “the most balkanised place on earth” (p. 62). Thompson argues throughout the book that some form of integration is necessary to eliminate dependency and promote equal opportunities (p. 62 *et passim*), but unity has been thwarted by contradictory impulses, like the wish to sustain North American or European hegemony, cesessionist tendencies within the region, and the failure of federation. Thompson seems to imply that greater cooperation within the region will result in alleviating inequality within a nation-state. Linking macro with micro in this way is treated as a kind of domino effect, where the benefits of unity at the state level will somehow naturally reach local populations, spurring greater, and better, democracy.

The section on “Economics” (three chapters) is the book’s strongest. Caribbean economies are “small, fragile, open,” reflecting the “sad legacies of colonialism” (p. 102). With the premise that since the “Columbian invasion” (p. 132) Caribbean production, distribution, and exchange have largely been in absentee or expatriate hands, Thompson makes a good case for the distortion of local economies over time, debunking familiar assumptions about why the Caribbean is underdeveloped, such as allegedly limited resources, size, and population density. However, the puzzle of how to characterize power relations arises. In his very good discussion of the crippling effect of extracting profit out of the Caribbean into Euro-colonial hands, the metaphor of maternal nurturing is inverted: “The infant [Caribbean], robbed, never came to adulthood in the true sense of the word, but remained a feeble, underdeveloped and dependent creature” (p. 136). This bleak image is powerful politics, but conjuring creativity, cultural or otherwise, from it remains a daunting task.

The book’s final section, “Race,” contains two chapters on stereotypes and racial and color hierarchies. In a sub-section entitled, “The unacknowledged legacy,” Thompson wishes to underscore the heroic and admirable “Africans and their miscegenated offspring” (p. 191) whom the Europeans encountered. He presents selected Africans “famous throughout Europe,” whose “greatness has been affirmed in extant writing, painting and sculpture” (p. 191) – from Pope Victor I, to Hannibal, to Pushkin, to European royalty “infused with African blood” (p. 192). The dilemma is not whether to recuperate Western images of Africans but how to do so, whose standards to emulate? Thompson asserts that “through their system of brainwashing [Europeans] managed to get the oppressed to see life through their own distorted prism” (p. 206). Ultimately, then, a change in modes of thinking is necessary. Yet his own examples here arguably do not break free of that prism.

Is there an absence of ruins? Has dependence and disunity stifled creativity, or is creativity only allegedly stifled (a perception of inferiority also produced from dependence and disunity)? What comes through clearly is Thompson’s genuine concern for the state of nation-states caught up in cur-

rents not of their own making nor in their own interests. The "most challenging task ... is to divest our people of the colonial mentality, which is the most deep-rooted aspect of colonialism" (p. 248). Basically, he charges Caribbean masses to learn to think in a different way and unanimously agree upon an anti-colonial agenda, and to get more involved politically; and for Caribbean leadership to achieve political cooperation and – ideally – federation. The resolutions may be utopian but his call for emancipatory change is well intended and generous, perhaps plaintive. They are, however, also haunted by unrequited calls of a similar nature long made by colonized peoples. Avowing the structural constraints of the world-system and the contradictions within liberal democracies still begs the question of extrication: how much sovereignty – material, mental, or cultural – can exist, and who will articulate as much?

In *Nationalism and Identity*, Stefano Harney locates this articulation within fictional texts. Contemporary theories of nationalism, Harney argues, contain "a certain Eurocentrism in their perspective" (p. 195), which overlook nationalism's affective (psychological, emotional, spiritual) dimensions. Instead, structures and official discourses (metadiscourses) tend to be the focus, which, in turn, overdetermine any analysis. Caribbean fiction has come to be included in a new literary criticism that collapses postcolonial discourse into a contrast between center and periphery in a "'world-systems theory' of literature" (p. 5), which Harney contends is tantamount to "neocolonial exploitation in postcolonial theory" (p. 5). What we are left with is only an inadequate understanding of the persistence of nationalism in the world. An antidote is the "writerly imagination" (p. 26) that is contained, for instance, in the novel, the dominant art form of post-independence Trinidad. This imagination enables exploring the discourse on nationalism from a more inclusive yet dynamic angle. Harney's aim is not to explore the nation-state through a historical or sociological analysis. Concepts like nationhood and peoplehood often do not lend themselves to "hard data and reasoned argument" (p. 2). Following Jacques Derrida, Harney sees literature as able to interrogate the nation, where structures like legislation and law are fictionalized, contingent phenomena whose reality is indeterminate. Trinidadian authors, by means of the cultural forms that constitute their palette, illuminate the tension between defining national identity in terms of a sovereign political whole and perceiving the nation as individuals creatively engaged in cultural practices ("habitus") that produce the "cultural consistencies" (p. 18) from which nationalism emerges.

Beginning with C.L.R. James's observation that "the good life" consists of harmony between individual and state (p. 1), Harney argues that in being engaged with what the imagination has to offer, Trinidadian writers emphasize the vitality of Trinidad's "carnival of identity," and its ability to incorporate the "vagaries of a global mediascape and technoscapes" (p. 158).

Harney's concern with imagination resonates with Arjun Appadurai's approach, where it is a social practice with the power to "move the glacial force of the habitus into the quickened beat of improvisation" (Appadurai 1996:6). But Harney's coupling of imagination and global cultural processes is meant to underscore the importance of creative artists in the Third World as a kind of cosmopolitan social force in themselves, which departs from Appadurai's focus on the workings of imagination as a property of collectives and not simply emanating from gifted individuals (Appadurai 1996:8). The authors Harney features (Earl Lovelace, Michael Anthony, Valerie Belgrave, Willi Chen, Samuel Selvon, Neil Bissoondath, V.S. Naipaul, and C.L.R. James) imagine the nation – Trinidad – in ways that "make it visible to its people" (p. 25). In doing so, they challenge models of nationalism that unduly emphasize structure, counter literary criticism's Eurocentric interpretation of postcolonial texts, and assert the creative inventiveness of mass culture. Among Harney's most forceful deliberations are those on Selvon and Naipaul.

Harney argues that Selvon's *Moses* trilogy (*The Lonely Londoners*, *Moses Migrating*, *Moses Ascending*) is a case for understanding the creolizing cultures of Caribbean immigrants as much more than simply an image of decay and loss through colonization. We need to see Caribbean immigrants in metropolitan societies, for example, in terms of equally matched, mutually affecting populations, not as debilitated shadow cultures. Selvon, Harney posits, is a corrective to literary criticism's idea that Caribbean culture is only developed when it meets British national culture. Instead, creolism constitutes an assertive act of self-realization, a "predatory creolization" that "devour[s] and transform[s] cultures local and alien" (pp. 114-15). In recognizing how "culturally closed" 1950s London was, for example, Selvon shows the active role Trinidadian (and other Caribbean) immigrants played in "transforming that parochialism into a cosmopolitan creolism" (p. 112).

Harney's interest is not in problematizing the concept of creolization. He takes it as an abstract process expressed in empirical fact (basically, culture contact), and inverts its symbolism to signify vitality, in terms of both vigor and centrality, as opposed to enervation – loss, or transformations that are weaker than what was transformed. Harney sees this way of understanding creolization as possible if we recognize Selvon's treatment of creolization as a transforming power that is dynamic rather than progressive. That is, without implicit direction or purpose, creolization need not be a model of dilution and, ultimately, inferiority. How far can this artful claim take us toward his goal that Trinidadians (and presumably all colonized peoples) "arrive at a liberated imagination and a liberated nation" (p. 49)? Granted, freeing our minds so as to perceive the cultural relationship between colonized and colonizer as a "clash of stubborn equals" (p. 107) is

a critical step toward dismantling structural inequalities and the ideologies that sustain them. And repositioning Caribbean literature is clearly an important part of that project as long as culture is represented as art. Harney asserts that in the Caribbean, national culture has always been international because its economy has always been so; hence, there is no way to take the global out of the local there (p. 164). Later, he concludes that the imagination is this study's concern and other studies must focus on the economics of nationalism in the Caribbean and its diaspora (p. 195). Both statements speak to (though do not answer) the difficult question of the connection between imagination and nation. Only if the economy, as its own distinct kind of entity, is simply the vehicle of cultural diffusion, the *de facto* precondition for "creole" forms of identity, can it be the subject of a separate study, distinguished from a study of the imagination. Asking similar questions, though coming from a different premise, Alvin Thompson would likely take issue with this particular binary fracture.

V.S. Naipaul represents something of a paradox in seeking alternative discourses of nationalism in literature. On the one hand, as Harney wonderfully phrases it, Naipaul "imagines the history of Trinidad as a psychological absence in the mind of the nation" (p. 12). In a masterful recent essay, Naipaul exhibits Harney's characterization, albeit tempering a bit his usual pessimism with introspection:

Unlike the metropolitan writer I had no knowledge of a past ... the fiction one did, about one's immediate circumstances, hung in a void, without a context, without the larger self-knowledge that was always implied in a metropolitan novel. (Naipaul 1999:18)

With Naipaul's premise it would be difficult to recover the nation where it, in a sense, does not, cannot, even exist. On the other hand, however, Harney discerns an opportunity to rehabilitate Naipaul's place in literature. In their enthusiasm to deride Naipaul's ridicule of the Third World, critics have presented a distorted nationalist argument, where utopian or conspiracy theories smooth over ambiguities and ignore internal contradictions. So, if nothing else, Naipaul's work stands as a challenge to the assertions of uniformity among a people and the depictions of "inflexible" and "ambivalent" nationalism (p. 147). This line of reasoning seems a bit weak to me, since, essentially, Harney is shrugging, saying that what may be objectionable about Naipaul throws into relief the shortcomings of other, contrary views. This is not exactly effective persuasion to forgive. More compelling is Harney's point that in denigrating Naipaul's cosmopolitan (anti-local) perspective, critics miss that they are by the same token denying the global, cosmopolitan character of Trinidad itself. It is as if to say, Naipaul's view is counterfeit because his country, and others like it, are in fact not subject

to worldly influence, are not actors in the grand arena, that the “real people’s” national culture – of which Naipaul does not share – is somehow parochial. While hesitant to “paint Naipaul as a heroic figure” (p. 144), Harney probes the implicit assumptions underlying putatively progressive critiques of his work: there is an implicit denigration of allegedly provincial (backward) postcolonial nation-states when the only code for “cosmopolitan” is loyalty to the empire.

Even as he decries metadiscourses of nationalism as obfuscating the ingenuity of local forms, Harney treats the individual, the state, and the nation as reified and distinct entities which draw on each other, rather than as mutually constitutive representations. Autonomy, however, permits greater empowerment for each entity, and fictional texts can celebrate the creative agency of the local. Indeed, Harney’s final portrait is of C.L.R. James, whom he estimates to have “used history to level nationalism” (p. 187). What Harney means here is a kind of encapsulation of the theme of his book. James highlighted ordinary genius, always linking great Caribbean figures to the turbulence from which they emerged. In doing so, James reintroduced what was missing from Caribbean state nationalism: an interior, egalitarian history from the bottom up (p. 187). Therein lies an interesting paradox: perhaps it is only in fictional texts that individual, nation, and state are literally separate, and separable; that lived experience outside these works is a matter of representation – of individual, nation, and state as mutually constitutive discourses rather than as distinct entities. Whether or not this is because the texts of real life are perhaps more uncertain than those of the printed page is moot: Harney doubtless would reject such a premise.

Mutually constitutive discourses is the point of departure from which Bill Maurer is *Recharting the Caribbean*. Leaving us neither as Thompson did – dubiously hopeful – nor with Harney’s optimistic redress, Maurer’s focus is a debilitating contradiction in liberal democratic states: an ideology of equality and achievement through rational individuals’ efforts remains compelling even as people live according to social hierarchies in their everyday lives. Using the British Virgin Islands (BVI), a dependent territory of the United Kingdom, as a case in point, he examines notions of law and order, nature and culture, and “objective reality” in liberal democracies, asking how it is reconciled that individuals are seen as self-determining and yet also as possessing inherent, “natural” abilities. Foregrounding the role of the state in Caribbean colonialism and national identity, Maurer’s premise is that the liberal state is central in creating this determining nature, managing the conflicts among individuals whose roots lie in their putative natural differences, by means of such statecraft as law. Nature and law create each other, and produce the effects they name (p. 34). The strength of these insights is to point to the ways that concepts of nature and culture articulate within particular ideologies and thereby create or perpetuate various forms

of inequality. What gives one pause is that overreliance on phenomena being mutually constitutive can veer too closely to tautology.

If nature and law are equally cultural, we must understand how things are “naturalized” without reproducing the idea of “nature.” Juxtaposed with nature is its paradoxical flip side, “choice.” Identities like nationality and ethnicity, for example, which are seen in the BVI as inheritable, can under certain conditions appear to be “matters of choice and preference, at the same time that their bases appear deeply embedded in ‘nature’” (p. 34). “BVI” identity itself coalesced through such state practices as authoring laws claimed to be uniquely suited to its own special national character and citizenry of “belongers.” Legislation like the International Business Companies Ordinance (1984) called attention to the BVI’s ability to write its own destiny, in a sense, through crafting legislation that created the specialized niche of tax haven for itself in the world economy (and, not coincidentally, establishing a marketable profile). The development of the BVI as a tourist destination drew in immigrant workers, who reinforced BVI national identity in being “non-belongers” and who are also participants in a hierarchical social order that is organized according to purportedly natural dictates orchestrated by individual choice.

The BVI presents particularly fertile ground for this research because BVI identity is intimately tied to modern statecraft, given its anomalous character. It has a shorter history than many of its Caribbean neighbors, it has no plantation legacy, and its racial, ethnic, and class hierarchies are of relatively recent vintage (not being well established until the mid-twentieth century). In establishing itself as profitably and conspicuously as possible in an ever-globalizing, competitive world, the BVI demonstrates that rather than globalization stifling distinct national identities, it stimulates them. And contrary to the idea that globalization is making the state obsolete, the BVI is an example of the way the state works (e.g., through law) in concert with global trends. In this regard Maurer is particularly good at showing how apparently disparate phenomena are inextricably linked. For example, establishing their own citizenship enabled BVI Islanders to devise a tax system that could shelter new classes of foreigners from British tax laws. But tax havens must offer political stability. This stability was promised with the enactment of the British Nationality Act (1981), which, in denying citizenship (thus, voting) rights to half the territory’s population, ensured that no voting blocks of disgruntled immigrants could be formed (p. 149). The Act equated Britishness with whiteness, and increased racial discourse in the BVI, manifested, in part, as distinctions between BVI Islanders and Caribbean immigrant non-belongers – even as neither of these groups is equated with whiteness. Racial discourse was also amplified as tax haven investors worried about “mixed marriages” (immigrant/citizen offspring) populations (p. 133) who, even if without voting rights, ostensibly jeopardize political stability.

Maurer makes the fascinating point that BVI identity becomes enraced through the children of immigrant and citizen union becoming designated “half breeds,” another refraction of the Nationality Act. The law plays its part, too: non-citizens’ inequality is not allayed by law; law in liberal democracies affirms it. (Note an interesting contrast between Harney’s triumph of immigrants in fictional texts and Maurer’s immigrant subordination in legislative texts.)

That its very existence as a particular kind of place is tied to legislative practices enables Maurer to devote each chapter to a different way that articulatory practices, or creolizing technologies, produce momentary stabilizations (reified entities) which become sources of identity in a world that always seems in flux. Maurer’s theorizing, drawn from Bruno Latour, Marilyn Strathern, and Verena Stolke, among others, is based on a rethinking of the familiar Caribbean concept of creolization. Briefly, instead of being a blending of distinct things, creolization, Maurer states, is a process that produces the object that it attests to rather than being derived from it (p. 29). An important example of creolizing technologies in the BVI are what Maurer calls transition narratives, BVIlander discourse about immigrants and the changes allegedly wrought by them. Transition narratives are teleological stories that recall a “natural” past whose unfolding has been made to deviate from its “‘original’ and ‘true’ course” (p. 21). Non-belonger workers are depicted as eroding law and order, spoiling nature, and introducing class disparities to a putatively homogeneous and equal BVI nation. Premised on inevitabilities, these narratives point to “real objects” that have “real effects” (p. 25), and thus it is necessary to see how realities derive, ultimately, from discourse. Employing Judith Butler’s (1993) concept of reiteration, Maurer understands transition narratives (creolizing technologies, articulatory practices, discourses) as producing the objects that are the basis for their commentaries. Continuously repeated (reiterated) in everyday life, transition narratives materialize a supposedly stable reality of choices constrained by nature. Challenging the premise that there “really” is a reality underlying cultural constructions, Maurer follows Butler’s lead in suggesting that cognitive categories are themselves ephemeral, emanating out of “citational practices” (creolizing technologies). Effects, rather than enduring conditions, obtain.

Both locals and immigrants live through the ideology of rational individuals negotiating nature through choice. In asserting they are individuals and not members of groups, immigrants “share with BVIlanders a moral discourse of individual contribution” (p. 263), claiming similar natures and equality with BVIlanders. This helps maintain the status quo; they do not challenge the system that subordinates them because the system offers them a way to get their piece of the pie. Because they are ranked lower in the hierarchy than BVIlanders, immigrants by definition have “bad” natures,

but these "bad" natures can also explain the immigrants who do get ahead: they are the immoral means that let immigrants succeed at the expense of "good" BVI Islanders. This dichotomy, however, seems a bit neat. The recognition that badness can be its own reward implies that there must be some degree of ambivalence on the part of BVI Islanders and immigrants, a pressure on the conviction that goodness rises to the top. It is hard to imagine that BVI Islanders have no grudging allowance for Indo-Guyanese immigrants' successes, for example, such as exists in the Trinidadian view of Indos in Trinidad.

We need to hear more directly from immigrant non-belongers. I think Maurer is correct that for a change in consciousness to result in resistance, Guyanese immigrants would have to stop participating in the dominant discourse of the moral world they share with BVI Islanders, and where class would have to supersede the individual as point of reference (p. 121-2). But relegating these processes to discursive modes does not leave as much room for agency as would be necessary to consider how these changes might actually be enacted. Maurer asserts that "in no case is the overarching system of dominance challenged" (p. 263). That there would be no fissures anywhere, no ambivalence, seems improbable. One way for emphases on discourse not to appear hermetically sealed would be to speak more about consciousness. Consciousness involves modes of knowing. As Jean and John Comaroff (1991:29) argue, between a continuum of hegemonic (submerged) and ideological (apprehended) knowledge and experience lies "the realm ... of inchoate awareness, of ambiguous perception, and sometimes, of creative tension." We could use more of this in Maurer's otherwise penetrating argument.

If reality is ever-created, then studying these processes seems to call for a focus on experience. We do not get a deep inspection of BVI Islander experience as Islanders know it, possibly because of extensive theorizing relative to ethnographic data. Further, if things are only objectively "real" for people through their reiteration, then does the larger Caribbean "ordering system of inequality" (p. 206) that Maurer acknowledges, conjoin with anything more? Perhaps structural power, "the power to deploy and allocate social labor" (Wolf 1999:5)? This is not to fault Maurer, who deftly deploys his theoretical apparatus of choice. Rather, it is to reiterate, so to speak, that the mysteries of power remain unsolved.

These books tell us much about different theoretical and methodological approaches to power. The authors arrive at a not entirely dissimilar place, however: power (as authoritative and transformative force) is significantly, perhaps largely, expressed in the domain of ideation – whether it be mentality, imagination, or discourse. We remain haunted by our own intellectual questions, if also by historical legacies and socio-cultural processes. As Maurer, among others, correctly observes, that it is constructed does not

make lived experience any less concrete. We need, therefore, to focus on meaning in lived experience in ways that engage both the "material" and the "materialized," the visceral with the ephemeral.

While there is good reason to reject most claims of universal characteristics among human beings, perhaps one undeniable quality is our creativity – that unpredictable and often contradictory energy that moves us to act on, and against, the constraints that are also of our own making. The still tenacious commonsense that interprets global issues like unequal development, nationalist stances, and (neo-)colonial exploitation in terms of "cultural deficits" (Will 1999:64), misses (or ignores) this dimension of human creativity. In contrast, Thompson, Harney, and Maurer engage it. Each goes a long way in demonstrating far more constructive ways to apprehend the Caribbean. Of course, one of the challenges remaining, for us all, is to lessen the divide between pervasive popular wisdom and often circumscribed academic meditations.

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BOOKSHELF 1999

It is our pleasure to announce that in this millennial issue, the annual Caribbeanist Hall of Shame has shrunken dramatically and includes but eleven scholars and fourteen books. As always, we list those works that, as of press time (January 2000), have not been discussed because the scholars who agreed to review them have – despite reminder letters – neither provided a text nor relinquished the books so that they could be assigned to someone else. (As has become our custom, we indicate slack reviewers' names with both initial and final letters, in an attempt to forestall false accusations and protect the reputations of the innocent.) And as in past years, we hope this may serve as a kind of backlist "books received":

*The Americas in the Age of Revolution, 1750-1850*, by Lester D. Langley (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1996, cloth US\$ 35.00), and *Sugar Island Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment: The Political Economy of the Caribbean World*, by Arthur L. Stinchcombe (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, cloth US\$ 45.00) [C—n F—k];

*Los Indios de las Antillas*, by Roberto Cassá (Quito, Ecuador: Abya Yala, 1995, n.p.), and *Arqueología lingüística: Estudios modernos dirigidos al rescate y reconstrucción del arahuaco taíno*, by Manuel Álvarez Nazario (San Juan PR: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1996, n.p.) [J—e O—r];

*Economy and Environment in the Caribbean: Barbados and the Windwards in the Late 1800s*, by Bonham C. Richardson (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997, cloth US\$ 49.95) [H—y McD. B—s];

*A Day for the Hunter, A Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti*, by Gage Averill (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, paper US\$ 17.95) [G—s F—t];

*Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico*, by Arlene M. Dávila (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997, paper US\$ 19.95) [C—d S—a];

*Gender and Nationalism in Colonial Cuba: The Travels of Santa Cruz y Montalvo, Condesa de Merlin*, by Adriana Méndez Rodenas (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998, cloth US\$ 34.95), and *Impressions of Cuba in the Nineteenth Century: The Travel Diary of Joseph J. Dimock*, edited by Louis A. Pérez, Jr. (Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998, paper US\$ 16.95) [R—é P—o];

*Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World*, by José Trías Monge (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1997, cloth US\$ 37.50, paper US\$ 13.56) [L—s F—a];

*Caribbean Migration: Globalised Identities*, edited by Mary Chamberlain (New York: Routledge, 1998, cloth US\$ 80.00) [M—y C. W—s];

*Cubans in Puerto Rico: Ethnic Community and Cultural Identity*, by José A. Cobas & Jorge Duany (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997, cloth US\$ 39.95) [X—r F. T—i];

*Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme & Margaret Iverson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, paper £13.95) [R—d G—e];

*The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580-1880: Trade, Slavery, and Emancipation*, by Pieter Emmer (Aldershot U.K.: Ashgate, 1998, cloth £49.50) [R—y B—a-S—e].

Literary works (including, of course, only those volumes that have been sent to the journal by their publishers) kick off the books which, for a variety of reasons, are not being given full reviews in the journal. As usual these days, the French Antilles leads in quantity. Raphaël Confiant, alone, contributes three new works. *La dernière java de Mama Josepha* (Paris: Mille et Une Nuits, 1999, paper 23 FF), is a "polar" built around the mysterious death of a Martiniquan-born Paris concierge, with the residents in her Belleville apartment house – Beurettes, ambiguous Antillian chabines, Vietnamese, and others – the prime suspects, and with a Martiniquan-born police inspector carrying out the enquête. The ample doses of slang, sex, cruelty, and low-life makes the book a carnivalesque parody of the genre, overflowing with words, and perhaps meant to be read as a tour de force of signifying upon Chamoiseau's *Solibo. Régisseur du rhum* (Paris: Ecriture, 1999, paper 125 FF), continues the somewhat cardboard, didactic *récit* about 1930s life in and around the canefields that Confiant began in *Commandeur du sucre* (1994). And in *L'archet du colonel* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1998, paper 110 FF), a novel that moves between the early nineteenth century (in Saint Lucia, Martinique, and Guadeloupe) and Martinique at the moment of the Tricentenaire in 1935, the usual Confiant themes abound (with a familiar mixing of fictional and historical figures), but the language seems more sober and dutiful – for us, it is less inspired

than his earlier work. In Maryse Condé's *Le cœur à rire et à pleurer: Contes vrais de mon enfance* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1999, paper 89 FF), we find largely somber scenes from a childhood in bourgeois Guadeloupe, painted in colors that match rather faithfully the personality of the adult writer, with the occasional characteristic glimpse of humor. And Gisèle Pineau's *L'âme prêtée aux oiseaux* (Paris: Stock, 1998, paper 110 FF), visits women's memories of past loves in St. John, Liverpool, New York, Guadeloupe, and Paris.

Four French Antillian works have been published in English translation. Powerful, haunting, and appropriately opaque, *Black Salt: Poems by Édouard Glissant* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998, paper US\$ 16.95), selections from 1947-79 translated and introduced by Betsy Wing, gives a sweeping introduction to Glissant's poetic project. *Land of Many Colors & Nanna-Ya*, by Maryse Condé, translated by Nicole Ball (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, paper US\$ 12.00) presents two 1997 novellas that explore the complexity of recovering family histories, one in the French Caribbean, the other in the Jamaica of the Maroons. *Childhood*, by Patrick Chamoiseau (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993, paper US\$ 15.00), is Carol Volk's lively translation of *Antan d'enfance*, the captivating memoir of Chamoiseau's earliest years. And *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, cloth US\$ 25.00), is Linda Coverdale's translation of *Chronique des sept misères*, Chamoiseau's début novel (1986), which we think remains his finest.

Moving into the Anglophone orbit, we find two collections of short stories. *Looking for Josephine*, by John Stewart (Toronto: TSAR, 1998, paper US\$ 13.56), deals with the bitter-sweet ironies of return – the middle-aged professor, long living in the United States, coming home to a village Trinidad that lives largely in memory; this is an honest, often moving meditation on aging, nostalgia, and a changing island. The four stories in Lasana M. Sekou's *Brotherhood of the Spurs* (St. Martin: House of Nehesi, 1997, US\$ 15.00) move from pre-colonial Ashanti to twentieth-century St. Martin, from cockfighting to a futuristic dream of a united and independent island. Sekou shifts genre in *Big Up St. Martin: Essay and Poem: Colony, Territory, or Partner? The Cubs are in the Field* (St. Martin: House of Nehesi, 1999) to make an impassioned yet reasoned plea for independence soon. In *Empress of the Splendid Season* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999, paper £6.99), Oscar Hijuelos depicts three decades of life among Cubans trying to make a go of it in post-World War II New York City.

The year's reissues and anthologies include George Lamming's *Season of Adventure* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999 [orig. 1960], paper US\$ 17.95), one of the greatest Caribbean novels. This sprawling exploration of the confrontation between tradition and modernity joins Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, *Natives of My Person*, *The Emigrants*,

and *The Pleasures of Exile* as Michigan paperback reprints. We also note with pleasure the paperback reissue of *The Pond (La Charca)*, by Manuel Zeno-Gandía (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener, 1999, paper US\$ 16.95), the late nineteenth-century Puerto Rican realist novel, in the translation by Kal Wagenheim that was first published in 1982. In *A Haiti Anthology: Libète* (Kingston: Ian Randle; London: Latin American Bureau; Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener, 1999, paper US\$ 19.95), editors Charles Arthur and Michael Dash have put together an excellent selection of fragments of novels, poetry, social science, photo journalism, and literary criticism (plus useful bibliography) to paint the whole heart-wrenching panorama of Haitian history. *English Trader, Indian Maid: Representing Gender, Race, and Slavery in the New World: An Incle and Yarico Reader*, edited by Frank Felsenstein (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, paper US\$ 17.95), presents a fine compilation of relevant texts – from Ligon's original version of the story through George Colman's comic opera to American and Caribbean versions – preceded by useful introductions. Finally, in a reissue of *Best Poems of Trinidad*, chosen by A.M. Clarke in 1943 (Dover MA: Majority Press, 1999, paper US\$ 10.95), Tony Martin presents this early anthology of Trinidadian poetry anew, followed by a 1998 interview with the original compiler.

On to works of literary criticism not otherwise reviewed in the journal. *The Poetics of Derek Walcott: Intertextual Perspectives*, edited by Gregson Davis (special issue of *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, spring 1997, vol. 96 no. 2) gathers a series of excellent essays, including the transcription of a talk by Walcott about *Omeros* and Romare Bearden. In *Countermodernism and Francophone Literary Culture: The Game of Slipknot* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1999, paper US\$ 18.95), Keith L. Walker offers a close (postcolonial) reading of the work of Aimé Césaire, Léon Gontran Damas, and Gérard Etienne (as well as several Francophone authors from beyond the Caribbean). *Rayonnants écrivains de la Caraïbe: Haïti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane: Anthologie et analyses*, by Régis Antoine (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1998, paper 148 FF), offers some one hundred snippets from some fifty authors, sandwiched together with mini-biographies and *explications de texte*. Michiel van Kempen's *Kijk vreesloos in de spiegel, Albert Helman 1903-1996: Notities, nota's, noteringen* (Amsterdam: In de Knipscheer, 1998, paper, NLG 25.00) is a carefully drawn portrait, by the most accomplished critic of Suriname literature, of Suriname's greatest writer, Lou Lichtveld/Albert Helman.

We have received a number of photo books. *Vodou: Visions and Voices of Haiti* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1998, paper US\$ 19.95), by photographer Phyllis Galembo, presents some of the most spectacular (albeit posed) photos ever taken of *vodouisants* – haunting and visionary, the images far outshine the text. *Cuba—Going Back*, by Tony Mendoza (Austin: University

of Texas Press, 1999, paper US\$ 22.95) is an unflinching account by a well-to-do Cuban-born photographer (currently teaching at Ohio State) who returned to his memory-island for a three-week visit after an absence of thirty-six years. Fine photos and informal interviews with people in many walks of life combine with the author's prose to project a resolute but honest anti-Castro picture. *Habaneros: Photographs of the People of Havana*, by Kenneth Treister (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1997, cloth US\$ 29.95), presents stark b/w photos, taken during a 1997 visit, largely of once-grand single-family mansions now broken up into multi-family apartments – peeling paint, dark ruined interiors, and "impoverished people." *Images of the Spanish-American War, April-August 1898*, by Stan Cohen (Missoula MT: Pictorial Histories, 1997, paper US\$ 29.95), celebrates "one of America's most popular conflicts" by presenting some eight hundred photos, drawings, news clippings, sheet music, and other memorabilia in scrap-book fashion, interspersed with a generally triumphalist text. *Martinique d'antan* and *Guadeloupe d'antan*, each by Anne & Hervé Chopin (Parmain: HC Éditions, 1997 [99 FF] and 1998 [119 FF] respectively) present 170 (M) and 220 (G) postcards from the early twentieth century, illustrating numerous aspects of the way it used to be – street scenes, various *métiers*, natural wonders, and so on. *Des lettres en Guyane*, by Yves Bergeret & Hervé Bacquet (Paris: Passage d'encres, 1998, n.p.) offers evocative photos, ink drawings, poems, and *carnets de voyage* by two French artists in western Guyane. Their *Guyane: Des espaces et des hommes* (no place: Editions A Die – OCRG, 1998, 100 FF) presents an unfortunately superficial text combined with absolutely marvelous color photos of lived-in spaces and painted signs (mailboxes, woodcarving advertisements), especially by/of Maroons on the outskirts of St. Laurent. Finally, *Indiens de Guyane: Wayana et Wayampi de la forêt*, by Jean-Marcel Hurault and Francoise & Pierre Grenand (Paris: Autrement, 1998). Called by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his preface "un petit 'trésor' de l'ethnologie guyanaise," this book, which regroups more than seventy of Hurault's black and white photos (dating from the 1940s to the 1960s) with texts by the Grenands, bears stunning witness to a world on the wane.

On to the realm of art. *Contemporary Art from Cuba: Irony and Survival on the Utopian Island/Arte Contemporáneo de Cuba: Ironía y sobrevivencia en la isla utópica* (New York: Delano Greenidge Editions, 1999, paper US\$ 35.00), edited by Marilyn A. Zeitlin and with substantive (bilingual) essays by Gerardo Mosquera, Tonel (Antonio Eligio Fernández), and Zeitlin, is the catalogue of an exhibition organized by the Arizona State University Art Museum and currently touring the United States, that presents the work of younger Cuban artists, aged 24-39 – an eye-opener! *Art in Barbados: What Kind of Mirror Image?*, by Alissandra Cummins, Allison Thompson & Nick Whittle (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1999, cloth n.p.), pub-

lished in association with the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, presents a valuable survey of modern and contemporary art in Barbados, from the 1930s to the present, discussing the work of more than one hundred artists, with copious color plates.

We have seen an unusual number of works that, in spite of being devoted only in part to the Caribbean, may be of interest to *NWIG* readers. *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic*, by Rachel O. Moore (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2000, paper US\$ 17.95), our first *NWIG*-reviewed book with a millennial date, is noteworthy here for its opening image: Clark Gable performing literal “cinematic magic” to counter the “voodoo” of the “Djukas” (actually, Matawais) in 1930s Suriname, as seen in MGM’s *Too Hot to Handle*, winner of the 1938 Oscar for best film. The film presents one of the best examples anywhere of how far Hollywood went out of its way to coach exotic peoples to act like Tinseltown savages – in this case taking a large film crew to Dutch Guiana to teach Matawais to wear feathers and jewelry that might look more at home on the set of an Italian opera, to dance in caveman (as opposed to Maroon) fashion, to babble in a nonsense tongue, and to practice rites for the camera that had never been seen before or since, except in other Hollywood films (usually of Africa but perhaps also Haiti).

*The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, edited by Isidore Okpewho, Carole Boyce Davies & Ali A. Mazrui (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, cloth US\$ 59.95), presents thirty-three original essays, many by well-known scholars, representing various shades of opinion – from Afrocentric to Atlanticist – and including a number of Caribbean examples. *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean: Social Dynamics and Cultural Transformations* (Volume II: Eastern South America and the Caribbean), edited by Arlene Torres & Norman E. Whitten, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998, paper US\$ 24.95) brings together a rich selection of previously-published papers by a variety of scholars, living and dead, with introductory essays (and one new chapter) by the editors. *Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State: The Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean*, edited by Aviva Chomsky & Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1998, paper US\$ 21.95), brings together important essays on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century bottom-up history, covering in its Caribbean chapters Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting*, by Beth Fowkes Tobin (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1999, paper US\$ 18.95) is a cultural studies-style exploration of the history of colonialism, including a provocative chapter on “Taxonomy and Agency in Brumias’s West Indian Paintings.” *Pan-Africanism and Its Detractors: A Response to Harvard’s Race-Effacing*

*Universalists*, by Opoku Agyeman (Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997, cloth US\$ 69.95) is an unrestrained Afrocentric diatribe directed at the thought of Kwame Anthony Appiah (particularly as expressed in his *In My Father's House*), with briefer forays against Harvard's Afro-American Studies Department and its *poteau-mitan*, the versatile Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Plantation Societies in the Era of European Expansion*, edited by Judy Bieber (Brookfield VT: Ashgate, 1997, cloth US\$ 112.95) forms part of a projected thirty-one-volume set, under the general editorship of A.J.R. Russell-Wood; these collections of previously-published articles, reproduced by an off-set type process, preserve the original typefaces and formats of each article, essentially offering readers a set of bound photocopies for something over \$100. *Trade Conditions and Labor Rights: U.S. Initiatives, Dominican and Central American Responses*, by Henry J. Frundt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998, cloth US\$ 55.00) contains two (of thirteen total) chapters that focus on the Caribbean.

In *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1999, cloth US\$ 64.95, paper US\$ 21.95), Françoise Vergès explores the political history of Réunion in a powerful text that cries out for comparison with the French Antilles. *The Origins of American Slavery: Freedom and Bondage in the English Colonies*, by Betty Wood (New York: Hill & Wang, 1997, paper US\$ 18.00), relates the seventeenth-century English experiments with different forms of labor in St. Kitts and Barbados to those that took hold in the mainland colonies. *Green Guerrillas: Environmental Conflicts and Initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean*, edited by Helen Collinson (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997, paper US\$ 19.99) presents useful reflections on Caribbean environmental struggles from Barbados to Cuba. *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America*, by Lars Schoultz (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, paper US\$ 19.95), is an even-handed overview that nevertheless serves as persuasive indictment of U.S. relations with its neighbors to the south, including those in the Caribbean. *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. Legrand & Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1998, paper US\$ 19.95), is a theoretically ambitious work that includes chapters on Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. *US Imperialism in Latin America: Bryan's Challenges and Contributions, 1900-1920*, by Edward S. Kaplan (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998, cloth US\$ 55.00), examines William Jennings Bryan's shift from advocacy of a "good neighbor policy" *avant la lettre* to the practice of "dollar diplomacy" (especially as regards Haiti and the Dominican Republic) once he became secretary of state in 1913. *Gobernar colonias*, by Josep M. Fradera (Barcelona: Ediciones Penínsular, 1999, paper n.p.), gathers several histor-

ical essays, some previously published, reflecting on the nature of European – particularly Spanish – colonialism. In *Hidden Lives: Voices of Children in Latin America and the Caribbean* (London: Cassell, 1998, paper US\$ 18.95), activist author Duncan Green attempts to give voice to underclass children in five South American countries and Jamaica, which he visited during the course of 1995.

*Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804*, by Srinivas Aravamudan (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1999, paper US\$ 20.95), is a highly theorized incursion into eighteenth-century European texts about the tropics, including a long chapter on *Oroonoko* (plus a couple of Stedman-Blake engravings) and an analysis of divergent readings of the figure of Toussaint. *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French*, by T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1999, paper US\$ 17.95) is quintessential cultural studies, describing itself as “a unique theoretical blend of Fanonian and Morrisonian insights and feminist investigations of visuality, sexuality, and the cinema ... [arguing] that black women, embodying the dynamics of racial/sexual alterity, historically invoking *primal fears* and desire in European (French) men, represent ultimate difference (the *sexualized savage*) and inspire repulsion, attraction, and anxiety, which gave rise to the nineteenth-century collective French male imaginations of Black Venus (*primitive narratives*).” Peter Mason’s *Infelicities: Representations of the Exotic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, cloth US\$ 39.95) presents a theory of the creation (and maintenance) of “the exotic,” including a number of early modern Caribbean examples. *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*, edited by Michael Hanchard (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1999, paper US\$ 17.95) will prove useful for comparative purposes to Caribbeanists. In *The Emperor’s Giraffe and Other Stories of Cultures in Contact* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1999, cloth US\$ 25.00), Samuel M. Wilson gathers brief essays (most previously published in the magazine *Natural History*) on culture contact, many set in the Caribbean and ranging from encounters between Columbus and Guacanagarí to the politics of contemporary West Indian cricket. *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel: Japan, Java, Tripoli en Suriname in de negentiende-eeuwse Nederlandse cultuur van het imperialisme*, by Susan Legêne (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1998, paper NLG 59.00), is a theoretically ambitious, not-always-well-informed attempt to read the culture of Dutch nineteenth-century imperialism through the texts, images, and collections made by selected participants in the colonial venture in, among other parts of the far-flung empire, Suriname.

Turning to historical works for which we were unable to find (or did not solicit) reviewers, we begin with works of reference. Despite a distinguished editorial board, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*,

edited by Junius P. Rodriguez (Santa Barbara CA: ABC Clio, 1997, 2 volumes, cloth \$195.00) disappoints in both coverage and accuracy. Choice of entries seems quite random. There are brief essays on Stanley Elkins but not Melville Herskovits or Fernando Ortiz, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese but not Sidney W. Mintz or Manuel Moreno Fraginals; there are no entries under Maroons or Resistance; the entry on Palmares gets the date of its conquest wrong and confuses Ganga Zumba with Zumbi; there is an entry on Trelawny Town Maroons but none on other Jamaica Maroons; there is an entry on Moravian slaves that makes no mention of the Danish Virgin Islands or Suriname. Overall, this work compares poorly to its recent competitors, the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery* and Oxford's *A Historical Guide to World Slavery* (which were reviewed in "Bookshelf 1998"). Compiled by Michael Anthony, one of Trinidad's premier novelists, *Historical Dictionary of Trinidad and Tobago* (Lanham MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1997, cloth US\$ 84.00) is a six-hundred-plus-page, no-nonsense reference book aimed at highschool level and beyond, which is better on calypsonians than writers but contains a good deal of useful information (though the bibliography is weak). *Puerto Rico Past and Present: An Encyclopedia*, by Ronald Fernandez, Serafín Méndez Méndez & Gail Cueto (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1998, cloth US\$ 59.95) is a more impassioned work, aimed at mainland U.S. readers. It offers up-to-date supplementary readings at the end of each entry and provides a fine introduction to the island's history, personalities, and politics. It has a stronger voice than the Anthony volume, making it more fun to consult or simply read through.

*Black Rebels: African-Caribbean Freedom Fighters in Jamaica*, by Werner Zips (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener; Kingston: Ian Randle, 1999, paper US\$ 22.95) is the English translation of a book first published in German in 1993 and favorably reviewed in *NWIG* 70:358-60. In the new foreword, Franklin W. Knight, surveying "the colonial societies of the European New World," mentions the existence of long-lived Maroon communities in Jamaica, Saint-Domingue, Brazil, and Ecuador (forgetting Suriname) and then offers up the astounding claim that "only in Jamaica did the Maroon communities survive until the political independence of the country" (viii). *The Rise of the Phoenix: The Barbados Mutual Life Assurance Society in Caribbean Economy and Society, 1840-1990*, by Cecilia Karch with Henderson Carter (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1997, paper n.p.) is a work of serious local business history set within the broader economic history of the West Indies. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*, by Frank Moya Pons (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener, 1998, paper US\$ 21.95) appears to be a reprint edition of the 1994 English translation, revision, and extension of the author's 1992 foundational text, *Manual de historia dominicana*.

The past “commemorative” year in the French Antilles spawned diverse historical publications. In *D'une abolition, l'autre: Anthologie raisonnée de textes consacrés à la seconde abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (Marseille: Agone, 1998, paper 86 FF), Myriam Cottias presents a collection of some two hundred relevant texts, carefully chosen and introduced. *Dix semaines qui ébranlèrent la Martinique 25 mars-4 juin 1848*, by Édouard de Lépine (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1999, paper 130 FF), is at once witty, ironic, and polemical in trying to set straight some major controversies in Martiniquan historiography. De Lépine carefully dissects the relatively-recent but now widely accepted belief that on May 22, 1848, Martiniquan slaves liberated themselves days before the news of the Second Republic's April 27 emancipation decree reached their shores. (He notes that many Martiniquans now seem to believe the events of May 22 caused those of April 27 and that they feel superior to, for example, Guadeloupeans on that basis.) In a land where, the author rightly claims, everyone now fancies himself a historian (or, we might add, an anthropologist), historical facts and context matter particularly, and de Lépine insists on placing Martiniquan events within the broader framework of both French colonial policy and emancipation struggles in other Caribbean societies. The book also includes chapters stressing other inter-Caribbean ties, for example the welcome that St. Lucians and Dominicans gave Martiniquan maroons during the decade and a half when their islands were free and Martiniquans were still enslaved (with a subtext about the ways Martiniquans today look down upon their poorer brethren from these neighboring, now independent societies). And it ends with a polemical and controversial analysis of the ongoing debate about the 1999 passage of a law in the French National Assembly solemnly declaring slavery to be a crime against humanity. All in all, there is much to ponder here for anyone interested in the recent politics of memory regarding slavery and emancipation in the island that de Lépine characterizes derisively as struggling to become “the world champion of ‘the duty to remember’.” Georges B. Mauvois's *Un complot d'esclaves: Martinique 1831* (Lamentin, Martinique: Editions Les Pluriels de Psyché, 1998, paper, 120 FF) is a fine example of local history, a careful analysis of the historical minutiae surrounding the events of 1831 in and around St. Pierre, the most important city of the Lesser Antilles. By unraveling these events – which have sometimes been seen as a planter-driven protest against the instauration of the ideals of the July Monarchy – Mauvois argues the plausibility of an insurrection hatched by slaves and free coloreds and, in so doing, goes a long way toward demonstrating that the eventual emancipation of Martiniquan slaves was part of a long process of servile resistance, one too often forgotten in the current debates about this or that date for the commemoration of final emancipation.

Several miscellaneous publications on Cuba. *Investment in the New Cuban Tourist Industry: A Guide to Entrepreneurial Opportunities*, by Mark M. Miller & Tony L. Henthorne (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1997, cloth US\$ 59.95), is an upbeat how-to book for potential investors from the United States. *Cuba: Mensen, politiek, economie, cultuur*, by Emily Hatchwell & Simon Calder (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1998, paper NLG 19.90), translates a 1995 English guidebook that provides a good overview of social life and history. We were unable to find reviewers for *From Welcomed Exiles to Illegal Immigrants: Cuban Migration to the U.S., 1959-1995*, by Felix Masud-Piloto (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, cloth US\$ 53.50, paper US\$ 21.00), *Cubans and the Mass Media in South Florida*, by Gonzalo R. Soruco (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996, cloth US\$ 39.95), and two books that give gripping evidence of how close we came to a shooting war in 1962 – *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, edited by Ernest R. May & Philip D. Zelikow (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, paper US\$16.95), and *Missiles in Cuba: Kennedy, Khruschev, Castro and the 1962 Crisis*, by Mark J. White (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997, paper US\$ 12.95).

Two on religion. *Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective*, by Noel Leo Erskine (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 1998, paper US\$ 19.95) is a revision of this Jamaica-born theologian's 1981 book of the same name. *Winti Culture: Mysteries, Voodoo and Realities of an Afro-Caribbean Religion in Suriname and The Netherlands*, by Henri J.M. Stephen (Amsterdam: Henri J.M. Stephen, 1998, paper n.p.), a version of the self-taught author's several similar books in Dutch intended to introduce Afro-Suriname folk religion to a broader audience, also contains some materials that will be of interest to specialists.

Continuing in the (former) Dutch colonial orbit, *Wraak der wijsheid: Het verlangen van Suriname*, by Theo Para (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1998, paper NLG 22.50), presents a critical analysis of the political history of Suriname since the 1980 coup, arguing the enormous (and very much ongoing) destructive influence of Desi Bouterse on the well-being of the country. *Dede pikña ku su bisiña: Papiamentu-Nederlands en de onverwerkt verleden tijd*, by Florimon van Putte (Zutphen, Netherlands: Walburg Pers, 1999, paper NLG 24.50), is an analysis, and a history, of the political struggle for the use of Papiamentu as language of instruction in Netherlands Antilles schools. *Catalogus Collectie Antilliana* (The Hague: Dienst Bibliotheek en Archief, 1998, paper NLG n.p.) is the printed card catalog of more than 4000 works on the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba (including all disciplines plus fiction, poetry, and videos) at the public library of The Hague.

Some miscellaneous works worth mention: *A Guide to the Birds of the West Indies*, by Herbert Raffaele, James Wiley, Orlando Garrido, Allan

Keith & Janis Raffaele, with illustrations by Tracy Pederson & Kristin Williams (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, cloth US\$ 49.50), is the first comprehensive field guide in sixty years devoted to the birds of the Caribbean (including all the islands from the Bahamas through the Greater and Lesser Antilles plus San Andrés and Providencia – excluding only Trinidad and Tobago, the A.B.C. islands, and Margarita, whose bird life so closely resembles the nearby continent). It is a masterpiece of the genre, covering 564 species, with locality checklists, special sections on conservation, and myriad color plates. In *Grammaire du Cr  ole Martiniquais en 50 le  ons* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999, paper 128.70 FF in Martinique), Pierre Pinalie and Jean Bernab   help French speakers translate their native tongue into Creole phrases through careful attention to the intricacies of word order, parts of speech, grammatical rules, and the key role of punctuation to dispel ambiguities (pp. 29, 65 *et passim*); readers learn, for example, that the hyphen is what will allow them to distinguish *fam kouyon tala* (“that idiotic woman”) from *fam kouyon-tala* (“the wife of that idiot”) in this largely oral language. Two vibrant collections – featuring essays on theater, popular culture, language, and identity, plus varied contemporary poetry – from the Rockefeller Foundation-sponsored University of Puerto Rico annual symposia: *Segundo simposio de Caribe 2000: Hablar, nombrar, pertenecer*, edited by Lowell Fiet & Janette Becerra (San Juan PR: University of Puerto Rico, 1998), and *Caribe 2000, simposio III: Un convite de poetas y teatreros: Voz y performance en la(s) cultura(s) caribe  a(s)*, edited by Lowell Fiet & Janette Becerra (San Juan PR: University of Puerto Rico, 1999). *Guyana, the Lost El Dorado: A Report on my Work and Life Experience in Guyana, 1925-1980*, by Matthew French Young (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1998, paper £12.99), is a memoir of a lifetime spent in the interior of Guyana as diamond prospector, plantation overseer, planter, explorer, gold-digger, rubber-tapper, line-cutter, surveyor, road-builder, artist, hunter, and much else – ending with his eye-witness account of the immediate aftermath of the Jonestown massacre. *The Life of Una Marson, 1905-65*, by Delia Jarret-Macauley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998, cloth £19.99), is a straightforward biography of this Jamaica-born feminist, poet, social reformer, and BBC journalist who spent much of her career in England, the United States, and Israel. *The Caribbean: History, Politics, and Culture* (1998), by Thomas G. Mathews, collects this historian’s previously-published pieces (1952-97) on the region; there is neither a place of publication, a publisher, or a price. Finally, a most idiosyncratic and Afrocentric work, Diane M. Spivey’s *The Peppers, Cracklings, and Knots of Wool Cookbook: The Global Migration of African Cuisine* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999, cloth US\$ 29.50), which – amidst imaginative recipes ranging from “Incendiary Vaginas” to “Atalpa Uchu” – argues for the diffusion of

African foodways to pre-Columbian Olmecs and on to Chavin, as well as to Dravidian India, the Khmers, and well beyond.

Policy books have often been tough to get reviewed and we have come up short for the following. Despite contributions by a number of well-known authorities, several reviewers declined to take on *Caribbean Public Policy: Regional, Cultural, and Socioeconomic Issues for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Jacqueline Anne Braveboy-Wagner & Dennis J. Gayle (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1997, cloth US\$ 69.00). *Latin America and the Caribbean: Prospects for Democracy*, edited by William Gutteridge (Brookfield VT: Ashgate, 1997, cloth US\$ 72.95), is a reader collecting previously published essays, including four on the Caribbean – by Tony Thorndike & George K. Danns, Desmond Thomas & William Gutteridge, and Antoni Kapcia (two, on Cuba). *Policy Reform for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean*, edited by Michele Garrity & Louis A. Picard (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 1996, paper n.p.), focuses on structural adjustment in Jamaica and Trinidad with contributions that were first presented at a 1994 symposium in Jamaica. *Accounting Services and Growth in Small Economies: Evidence from the Caribbean Basin*, by David L. McKee, Don E. Garner & Yosra AbuAmara McKee (Westport CT: Quorum Books, 1998, cloth US\$ 65.00), is a survey of accounting services in the Commonwealth Caribbean, the Hispanic Caribbean, and selected French and Dutch jurisdictions.

Other books grew into “Bookshelf” entries as we sought reviewers and were repeatedly turned down, and we merely note them here: *Radical Caribbean: From Black Power to Abu Bakr*, by Brian Meeks (Barbados: The Press University of the West Indies, 1996, paper US\$ 12.00); *Assimilation / Generation / Resurrection: Contrapuntal Readings in the Poetry of José Lezama Lima*, by Ben A. Heller (Lewisburg PA: Bucknell University Press, 1997, cloth US\$ 35.00); *Una utopía inconclusa: Espaillat y el liberalismo dominicano del siglo XIX*, by Mu-kien Adriana Sang (Santo Domingo: Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, 1997, paper n.p.); *Der Wille zur Nation: Nationsbildung und Entwürfe nationaler Identität in der Dominikanischen Republik*, by Frauke Gewecke (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 1996, paper n.p.); *Imperiale Gegenwelten: Haiti in den französischen Text- und Bildmedien (1848-1870)*, by C. Hermann Middelanis (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 1996, paper n.p.); and *Women Plantation Workers: International Experiences*, edited by Shobita Jain & Rhoda Reddock (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, paper US\$ 14.99).

We end on a musical note. *World Music: The Rough Guide*, edited by Simon Broughton, Mark Ellingham, David Muddyman & Richard Trillo (New York: Penguin, 1995, paper US\$ 22.95) includes one large chapter on Caribbean sounds, divided into eight sections (from “Cuba” through “Zouk Takeover” to “Ska and Reggae Developments in Britain”). As with other

types of guidebooks, it's hard not to wince at mistranslations, garbled history, and stereotypes – of which this book has plenty – but there's also an awful lot of rough musical history and a good discography that makes it a lively read. *De man met de piccolo: Biografie over zijn vader Eddy Snijders*, by Ronald Snijders (The Hague: Conserve, 1998, paper NLG 29.95) chronicles the musical life and times (1923-90) of this composer, flautist, and trumpeter in classical orchestra, military band, and Suri-Latin *conjunto*. Tim de Wolf's *Discography of Music from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, Including a History of the Local Recording Studios* (Zutphen, Netherlands: Walburg Pers, 1999, NLG 39.50), a labor of love spiced with period photos, is a model of the genre – we learn about everything from the continuing *mariachi* tradition in the tiny Aruban village of Sabaneta (where 1930s Mexican sound films first inspired the Van der Linden family to create an Antillian version) to the better-known artists and labels of Curaçao. Finally, Rounder Records has released five rich and wonderful CDs in the "Caribbean Voyage" series of the Alan Lomax Collection (1962), under the general editorship of Kenneth Bilby and Morton Marks – *Caribbean Sampler* (with notes by Kenneth Bilby & Morton Marks), 1999; *Dominica – Creole Crossroads* (with notes by Morton Marks & Kenneth Bilby), 1999; *East Indian Music in the West Indies* (with notes by Peter Manuel), 1999; *Carriacou Calaloo* (with notes by Lorna McDaniel & Donald R. Hill), 1999; and *Brown Girl in the Ring: Game and Play Songs*, 1997 – each a treasure in its own right.

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